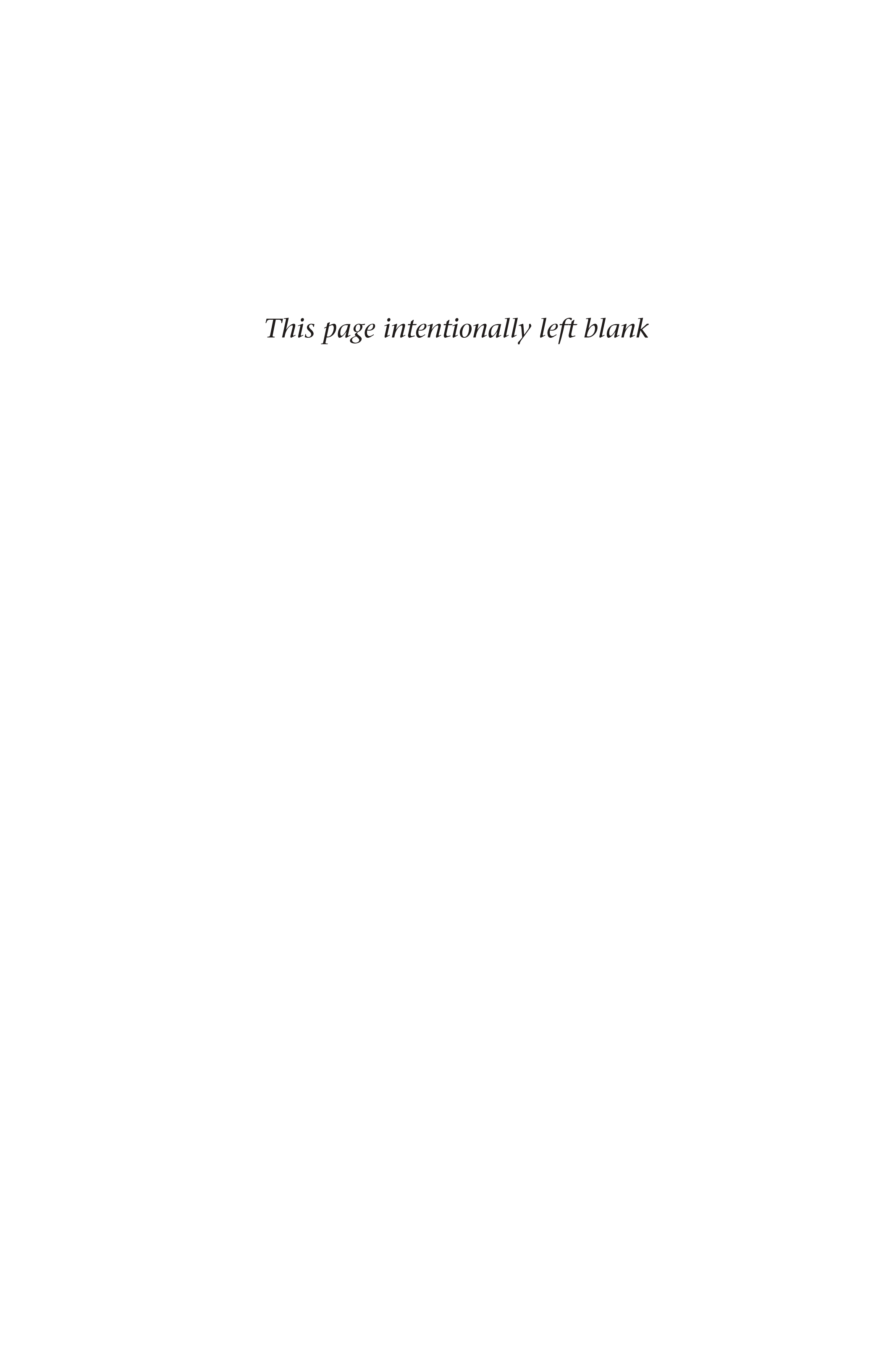


Living with Christianity, Islam, and Multiculturalism

MARIE-CLAUDE THOMAS

Women in Lebanon



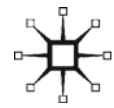
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Marie-Claude Thomas





WOMEN IN LEBANON

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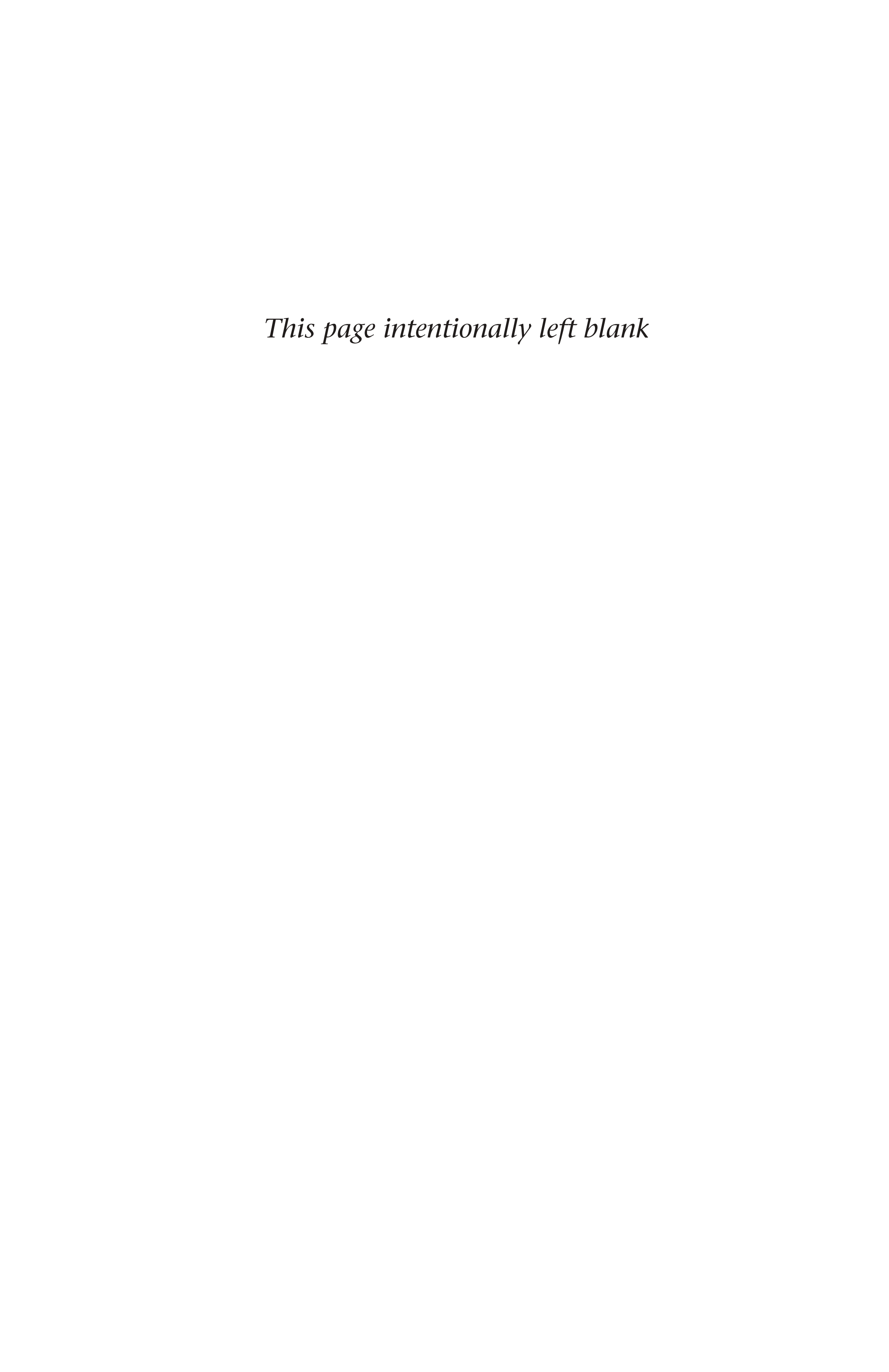
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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

On a Sunday in April 1975, I was visiting a friend in East Beirut. While sipping fresh lemonade on the veranda, looking at the pine trees of Sin el Fil, hearing the crickets chirp, and talking about our future in Lebanon, we suddenly heard the sound of repeated machine gun fire. Terrified, we asked, "What could this be?" Even as young people, we were aware of the quarrels that sometimes led to clashes in the western part of Beirut between armed refugee Palestinians and Lebanese soldiers. Yet this time, the repeated racket was close by, right in the heart of the Christian area. I ran home as fast as I could, telling myself this incident would soon be contained. I never envisioned that the consequence of this shooting would be a ferocious war that would ravage Lebanon for fifteen years and the suffering that would fall upon the entire Lebanese population.

On the evening news, I learned that the shooting was an exchange between the paramilitary Phalanges,[1] *members of the newly restructured Christian political party al Kataeb, and some Palestinian members of Fatah as they were crossing the Christian area of Ain el Rummaneh in a bus. The following Monday, we went about our business as usual, and life seemingly returned to normal as I took the final exams at my university. Yet, as the days passed, similar clashes occurred. A commando of Palestinians broke into the villa of former Lebanese president Camille Chamoun, situated along the Mediterranean Sea, with the aim of killing him. Fortunately, he was not home, but they destroyed his villa. Seemingly homeless, he moved into the apartment of Lebanese socialite and activist Maud Fargeallah, which happened to be in the building where my family and I were living. This temporary invitation lasted more than a decade, until his passing from old age in the summer of 1986. During this time, my building transformed not only into the residence of a former president, but also into the headquarters of the Hizb el-Ahrar, the Lebanese Christian National Liberal Party.*[2] *Camille Chamoun*[3] *actively participated in the civil war, and in 1976 he became the chief of the Lebanese Front encompassing all Christian militia. For me, the change meant the positioning of barricades along our street and militia soldiers in the entrance to our building, even though we did not fully support the politics of the Christian militia. That also meant that our political opponents ordered their militia to shell our area and specifically target our residence.*

This combination of circumstances obliged me to leave the country. In the beginning, my family and I thought that the situation would settle down after a few months, or at worst, a year. Thirty years passed before the end of the conflict. My leaving the country was gradual; in fact, I did not expect it to be permanent. As the war raged on, I postponed my return from one year to another until I ended up living in Paris for more than a decade. Then I met my husband and moved to the United States. I have returned to Lebanon several times to see my mother, father, and brothers, as well as my extended family and my friends.

Although Lebanon is no longer at war, it is still characterized by the many religious groups that once fought each other in the streets of Beirut but have somehow found a way to overcome their differences for the country's good. In spite of frequent political dissidence and periodic spurts of violence, Lebanon today is in many ways different from the Lebanon I left as a young woman. It has entered the contemporary age but because of its rich mix of cultural and religious fabrics, it has formulated its own definition of modernity. The women of my generation were privileged to have lived in a rather economically prosperous Lebanon and to have intellectually and creatively embraced the modernity emerging from the integrative Arab renaissance or *Nahda.* With a view to unifying—though unsuccessfully—the different cleavages within the Arab world, the synthesizing discourse of the *Nahda* steered away from sectarianism and fragmentation. The philosophical discourse of the nineteenth-century *Nahda* incorporated universal values and made significant contributions on issues pertaining to Arab women. In the diverse Lebanese society, progress meant openness and collaboration among Christians and Muslims for a democratic Lebanon that includes all confessions in the affairs of the state. Modernity for Christian and Muslim women meant openness toward rationalization, at once taking in Western culture while treasuring our own heritage. Urban Lebanese women, whether Christian or Muslim, followed similar paths in their evolution; no one tried to show the dominance of their own affiliation, at least not overtly.

Today, the Lebanon I knew seems to have been altered; a page has been turned. A different concept of modernity is emerging; a concept that some might describe as finding ways to benefit one community at the expense of the other, while others describe the change as an "enchanted modern." In the midst of this evolution,[4] Lebanese women of all religious groups are acquiring and adapting to new roles, while altering existing ones. Hizbullah's[5] women are embracing a new kind of modernity in which religion and identity are an integral part, an Islamic modernity based on the Iranian model propagated by Ayatollah Khomeini in the 1980s. Yet the Western model of modernity has

not disappeared. How then can one reconcile the two tendencies in a small country of 10,470 square kilometers?[6]

Is life better or worse than before? It is often in these terms that one poses the question of the status of women. The condition of women, in all of the countries of the world, is a subject currently at the heart of a great deal of intellectual debate. However, only rarely does one have the occasion to linger on the experience of a simple villager or urban woman in the midst of transformation, to ask her opinion on the issue rather than to extend abstract discussions, more so because she has her own say in this matter.

Until now no study has been dedicated to women's lives in the villages of the Bekaa in Eastern Lebanon. To sketch a coherent portrait of village women, one should not lose sight of the fact that rural life relies on traditions that evolve. No society can persist in a static state, and the notion of evolution is inherent in every anthropological study. I gathered evidence of the evolving status of Christian and Muslim Lebanese women based on my fieldwork in Saghbine and the surrounding villages in the Bekaa, first in 1981 and again in 2008 and 2009. My most recent research also included my participant observation of events in Beirut, in particular the legislative elections in June 2009.

Since my family is native to Saghbine, we spent our summer vacations there when I was a child. Saghbine is a Christian village in a region made up of 40 percent Christians and 60 percent Muslims. An economically self-sufficient and the most socially developed village of the region, its most striking feature is its cultural evolution and its openness to the outside, whether to big Lebanese cities or even to the West. Here, the status of women is close to that of the most evolved districts of Lebanon. Saghbine is one field of my exploration. This locality allows us to have access to different sections of the population, ranging from rural women to college students, from the woman working outside the home to the housewife.

When I did my initial research in the 1980s, I concluded that evolution in the lifestyles of Lebanese women came from their ability to link their modern conventions with traditional customs. This allowed women to move from a state of resignation to a more active role in determining their quality of life. In addition, I realized that Lebanese women experienced some sort of transcendental quality in the form of popular religiosity, which gave rise to a feeling of grandeur in some of them.

This feature is still prevalent given the rise in the status of women, both Christian and Muslim, in recent decades. Since the 1980s, many Lebanese men have found work opportunities in Arab countries, and women have successfully fulfilled the role of both mother and father. Many women remained unmarried because many men emigrated to the oil states or the West to work.

These women have proved to be capable of sustaining themselves and even financially supporting their families.

Religion has always been a dimension of Lebanese political and social reality. More and more today, and on a global scale, religions inform individual behavior and dictate state politics. It has become a means of modernization, an adaptation to globalization. Similarly, the increasing role of women in Hizbullah has reinforced the Iranian model because "they bear the burden of cultural authenticity as the markers of public piety. This social weight has added specific ramifications to their lives."[7] Hizbullah's women consider the wearing of the veil as a sign of embracing modernity, as they define it, while entering the public sphere.

Each time I return I realize that the love of one's country does not change; on the contrary, this love reinforces itself after many years of absence. A few social realities seem shocking at the beginning, such as the saturation of traffic or the lack of respect for traffic rules. In addition, the increased number of veiled women coloring the Lebanese landscape signifies an increased prominence of Islam in a country that was once called the Paris of the Middle East.

Despite these changes, I feel as if I am reliving the history of a unique country born at the end of the French Mandate in 1948. In 1943, Christians and Muslims agreed on the Lebanese Pact, an agreement based on religious pluralism. Some saw this agreement as successful, insofar as it takes the cultural and religious diversity of the Arab Muslim zones in the Middle East into account. Others, however, saw this agreement as the cause of a Lebanese identity crisis, insofar as the Lebanese formula or *sigha* does not contemplate anything beyond *communitarianism* or communalism in the sense that it demonstrates the limits of the quota system and of all attempts at unity through community.[8] In other words, communalism reflects the priority of group over national identity in the lives of individuals. As far as I could observe, however, the international reputation of Lebanon has survived. Lebanon remains what it has never ceased to be, a country of religious diversity, entente, and prosperity.

Though this study begins with a particular village, it also encompasses the neighboring villages and includes snapshots of contemporary Beirut. The particularity of my focus resides in the fact that Muslim-majority villages surround Saghbine, a Christian village divided between Maronites and Melkites. This proximity allowed me to compare the evolving status of women in Saghbine and of Lebanese women in general, including Muslim women. Does evolution allow the same rhythm for Muslim and Christian women? What are the motivations that determine their choices? Moreover, what are the major factors that slow down or impede the improvement of their social

status? According to my ethnographic observations, Christian and Muslim Lebanese women sometimes take divergent paths because of different ways of adjusting to modernity. This difference in perceptions is fueled by disparate religious beliefs.

In their path to evolution since the nineteenth-century *Nahda,*[9] and despite a discourse of difference, both Christian and Muslim women have presented more similarities than differences. The differences in views and values essentially relate to their respective religious backgrounds. Today, though Christian and Muslim women find themselves struggling with similar problems, some Muslim women, inspired by an Islamic-dominated sociopolitical regional context, are taking a divergent path from their Christian counterparts. Regional and global politics provide them with new resources to enter the public sphere and embrace modernity, which some perceive to be emphasizing differences rather than similarities. These women endeavor to reveal themselves as possible agents of reconstructing Muslim women's self. Are there future perspectives for a new kind of coming together that will enhance the status of all Lebanese women?

The effect of the Islamic modernity movement sweeping the Middle East since 1979 has impacted different aspects of Muslim Lebanese women's lives. The return of religion appears to be a more democratic, grassroots affair that is surprisingly more in tune with globalization. Today, and in this particular time in history, modernity is differently interpreted and lived by Shi'i women. These women no longer see modernity in the Western sense as progress and as a welcome development. My research indicates two models for women's identity: the Islamic modernity model that brings symbols of religion to the public sphere and the Westernized model adapted to the particular Lebanese context. The evolution of our society has led to a juxtaposition of the role of both Christian and Muslim women. My research strives to make sense of the meaning of this mixed modernity, whether the current religious resurgence is a passing phase or the adjustment of a secular civilization in crisis.

The two models are a reflection of two mentalities embedded in the pluralistic Lebanese mold. I believe that it is still possible for these two mentalities to find harmony as they evolve, to deepen the solidarity among Lebanese women and weaken sectarianism. A "United Lebanon" is not a myth. We hope that our new coming together will deliver Lebanon from being a land of constant confrontation between two models that are part of a bigger picture, the regional conflict in the Middle East.[10] The moral values that link the Lebanese people are powerful, and Lebanese women are marked by a common heritage of Christianity and Islam. The two monotheistic religions evolved in a common patriarchal society.

The equality between men and women and the entente between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon will not come out of the will and actions of men and women alone or Christians and Muslims alone, but from social relations and genuine dialogue that facilitate the coming together of all groups in the face of common civic responsibilities. A change of mentality is needed for social change and this transformation in women's rights and responsibilities must essentially take place in an open society.

What was presented for centuries as the nature of women has often proved to be a manufactured myth. Indeed, human nature must always manifest itself in culture. Culture has always supported masculine dominance in war as well as in the domestic realm. Women, by contrast, were relegated to a life of silence and resentment. The former era did not understand the complementary order of men and women, together as human beings, destined to speak in dialogue that allowed for individual gendered accomplishments. However, some women dedicated their lives to the liberation of their gender despite the fact that they received a compromised education. In Egypt, Kout el Kouloub lived the novel that she wrote about women's liberation at the onset of the twentieth century.[11] In Lebanon, Leila Baalbaki, a former student at the American University of Beirut, demanded the right of Muslim women to really live. She was considered risqué and daring in her themes. Like other female writers of the prewar generation (before 1975), she shifted away from politics and social issues in her writings to focus on women's issues, thus creating their own space for discussion.

Thesis, Methodology, and Goals

The Lebanese alternative modernities are analyzed within the intersecting framework of local, regional, and Western histories. The analysis traces the lives of Christian and Muslim women coexisting in a multicultural society and facing modernity. Since the Arab Spring has begun to draw attention to issues of change, modernity, and women's subjectivity, this book takes a unique approach to examining and describing the Lebanese "alternative modernities"; for Lebanese women, it is a state of being characterized by the relationship between religion and society, tradition and modernity. The transformation taking place illustrates that tradition and modernity can inhabit the same social universe and reinforce each other at times and be a cause of dissonance other times. Women from different groups may disagree in their interpretation of their alternative modernity; this lack of agreement threatens the unity of the country. This book is unique in that it brings together in a unified work the theme of women in Christian and Muslim contexts and that of multiculturalism.

The methodology is descriptive and analytical. I write as an insider while taking the responsibility of being self-critical. My ethnographical account is experimental in the sense that it simultaneously belongs both in the humanities and in the social sciences, and my analysis takes the split of the Lebanese people into account. My narration will be sensitive to the history and values of our cultural milieu. As a postcolonial ethnographer, I do not accept without criticism the superiority of Western conceptual categories or advocate for a Western system for our society; rather, I advocate for a rationale for change that reflects continuity with the past and the constitution of subjectivities.

Ethnography, like literature, reminds us of our presumptions; ethnography as a science is debatable since it consists of writing about cultures in a way that involves telling stories, making pictures, and formulating symbols. Ethnography explores the construction of a culturally constructed self; the "I" might shift from the individual to a collective voice, and thus ethnography could be termed experimental ethnography, navigating between the field journal and the autobiography. To render women's subjectivity and separate it from dominant narratives requires a deconstructive position aware of the difficulties and challenges arising from being accountable to different audiences. The changing paradigms and intractable problems encumber the holistic commitment of ethnography to fully understand a phenomenon. Rather, the researcher provides a meta-commentary, enacting a state of being in culture while looking at culture. Thus, experimental ethnography calls attention to feminist ethnography for the constitution of subjectivities and the risk of making assumptions, and my account in this research can be read as feminist or experimental ethnography.[12] Ethnography belongs simultaneously to science and the humanities, each having different norms to deal with truth and fiction; this is unlike the position taken by positivists who argue that good science is value-free and assume that truth is obtained by emphasizing objectivity and eliminating subjectivity in judgments and interpretations.

Instead of building a dichotomy, I will adopt a feminist strategy that builds on my connection with the investigated, using my own biographies and emotions as analytic guides. At the same time, I am aware that this approach can influence an objective interpretation and make me vulnerable to the biases of my own cultural assumptions.[13] I will strive to be aware, reflective, and critical of this dynamic rather than allowing it to maneuver my research implicitly.

In "On the Epistemology of Post-colonial Ethnography," Spickard argues that since the rise of ethnography in nineteenth century, and decades of colonial expansion, the Russians and the French hired ethnographers to record their subject's mores and customs, as well as their political structures and worldviews hoping that "power/knowledge"[14] would help them dominate the world. Unlike colonial anthropology, sociological ethnography grew out

of assimilation and a concern for social problems. Ethnography encouraged the notion that given the right environment and support, the socially disadvantaged would become just like us. There are two ways of presenting the "Other"; anthropological "Others" have usually lived in faraway places, and have been seen as exotic relics that need preserving while keeping away because they are not like "Us." Sociological "Others" are potential friends; we get to know them in order to change them and make them copies of ourselves.

Postcolonial ethnographers call these ideas imperialistic since they imply that the West has history and progress while the rest of the world is stuck in tradition. The colonial so-called objective and scientific ethnography encouraged this fiction, sustaining the perception that the observer knows it all. Matters have changed, at least among ethnographers, who rejected the colonialist-oriented roots of ethnography. "Rather than presenting results as a series of 'facts,' the new ethnography speaks of 'texts,' 'discourses,' and 'narratives.' " "Rather than taking the role of omniscient narrator, it touts 'reflexivity,' 'pluralism,' 'dialogue.' "[15] One cannot know "the Other" without involving the self and honestly presenting oneself in dialogue with the informant. Timeless culture will no longer do; rather than pretending to be a superior observer watching a subordinated observed, ethnographers now approach the issue of culture from both vantage points. Thus, ethnography based on the humanities becomes a path of knowledge that attempts to understand rather than objectify people to explain them; ethnography is this dual experience of science and humanity intimately and contradictorily bound. Truth and equality become the ideal regulative guide to the ethnographic researcher that makes progress possible through a dialogue of cross-cultural encounter rather than a one-way view. My research utilizes ethnography as a mechanism to enlighten readers, making the issues lived in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world more personal and more easily digested. Topics addressing current events such as the Arab Spring are increasingly in demand; there have been many titles on women and Islam, and on multiculturalism in Lebanon, but only a few have brought the themes together in a unified work.

Universalism is dialogue and respect for the voice of the "Other." "Universalism is no longer to believe that the West is universal, but the faith that humans can approach the universal by transcending their limited visions through dialogue with everyone."[16] What about ethnography's hidden politics? We are all human with different blindnesses and strengths, and as truth, equality has a special kind of ideal, one that pushes us out of our complacency. Commitment to any social value would add to people's biases; the beauty of regulative ideals is that while apparently limiting scientific inquiry, they actually deepen it. A commitment to truth and equality enables researchers to

understand the world more completely and their subjects more profoundly. These ideals are value-laden, as is science, precisely because of this commitment. I do not assume to be free of bias, and in my research, I work to listen attentively to the voices of the women, then I listen to my own voice carefully and try to be aware of the biases I hold, which makes a difference in the way I make sense of what the women are saying. My methodology tries to make as transparent as possible the bias in my work and in the sources I use for the reader to assess the information that I am presenting.

Regardless of their sects, Lebanese women are a product of Christianity and Islam, and my analysis of Christian and Muslim women stems from my Christian faith as well as my experience of growing up in Lebanon and mixing with Muslim families. Nothing seemed to me more natural than accepting different ways of worshipping or interpreting God's message in a slightly different way. Though I grew up in Ashrafieh, the Christian part of Beirut, my family's social circles transcended the locality where we lived. My parents always taught me to respect people regardless of their religion or their clothes. My father was a lawyer and his clientele included Muslims and Christians, and in Lebanon where people cherished togetherness and time spent socializing, it was natural to mix with Muslims, Druze, Alawite, or with any of the 18 sects that constitute the Lebanese fabric, without even being conscious of the fact. Any difference of religious worship and the usage of religious expressions while greeting someone seemed so natural to us. The presence of different faiths among us brought joy, enrichment, and self-reflection to our own way of life. I should also mention the solid personal friendships that were established between me and my Muslim friends, which never faded despite the many years of war that ravaged our common land. I therefore position myself as practicing the Christian faith within the unique diverse religious environment of Lebanon.

I began this project in 1980 when I was a doctoral candidate at the University of Paris. At that time, I studied a country marked by violence and conflict in the early years of the Civil War, which would last until the early 1990s. The role of women in Lebanese society was still traditional. Women found happiness in marriage, and both men and women perceived work as secondary compared to the primordial role of the family. Yet even then, the clash between tradition and progress was under way as the war upset and overturned the stability of the home.

Although my early research was focused on the life of Christian women in Saghbine, I could not help but observe how their lives compared to their Muslim counterparts. At the time of my writing in 1982, the effects of the Iranian Revolution on Lebanese Shi'i women were not yet evident; I found its influence to be much more prominent during my second phase of research

that began in 2008. In the past, the tradition of the veil was almost insignificant; now, this practice comes out of a resurgence of Islam that has captured the attention of scholars across the world.

In my more recent phase of research, I strove to identify the points at which evolutions in Lebanese society and evolutions in the role of women intersected for both Christian and Muslim women. I asked women if they felt that society was changing and asked them to elaborate on how they viewed their role in this transformation. At the heart of this endeavor was my desire to know how Lebanese women act as agents of change for their own status and for the evolution of Lebanese society overall. This study identifies elements of Westernization and the influence of Islamic resurgence on the lives of both rural and urban Christian and Muslim women. I explore the lifestyle of these women through my participant observations, in-depth conversations, and interviews.

During the second phase of research, I updated my data on Christian women in Saghbine, and I expanded my research base to include the transformation of Muslim women. I visited the southern belt of Beirut, the location of Hizbullah's headquarters. I spent the month of June 2009 in Lebanon to update my fieldwork and to vote in the legislative elections in which 600 candidates vied for 128 seats divided in parity between Christians and Muslims. This gave me the opportunity to observe the participation of Lebanese women in the political realm.

The book is divided into three main parts. Part I provides an overview of Saghbine, which allows the reader to see that the village is intrinsically a religious space, having been founded in between two churches. A traditionally rural zone, situated along one of several sources of water, Saghbine boasts a population that has been urbanized.

It is important first to depict the natural and social milieu in which the status of women emerges, for a better interpretation of their evolution. The geographic, historic, and demographic data presented in the two chapters in this part provide the concrete background for my broader analysis of gender and religion in Lebanon in the subsequent parts of the book. In addition, this part presents the lifestyles and values of rural and urban women of Saghbine. The first stages of life are described and analyzed, beginning from early childhood to adolescence, from motherhood to old age, all against the backdrop of the complexities of Lebanese culture and society. I analyze the modalities of marriages, the situation of married women and of mothers, aspects of women's daily life, widowhood, and women's work outside the house. Here, we will see the manifestation of these realities in the interview with Roula, a single woman who works in the village telecommunication office while taking care of her aging parents, and later in Part I the portraits of two Christian

women of the region: Laura, the wife of a former commander in chief of the Lebanese army and the mother of the current congressional representative of the western part of the Bekaa, and Georgina, who dedicated her life to charity work and the foundation of a medical dispensary in Saghbine.

Part II contains our discussion of women in Islam, including the emergence of the Shi'i community, the meaning of the National Pact,[17] and the consequences of *wilayat el faqih*[18] on Lebanon's future existence. I will underline the significance of the new women deputies elected to office in June 2009. Calling to mind the convergence of the past, present, and future, I will introduce the dilemma of modern Islam, the image of women in the Qur'an, and the nature of Islamic family law, especially the practice of divorce and inheritance. Islamic values now have great appeal to Muslims who reflect on some of their potential abuses as offset by financial safeguards, cohesive family life, security, and legal protections. This section also examines the growing practice of wearing the veil, and the role of women in Hizbullah. Muslim women speak about these issues in answers to my interview questions: Is the recent resurgence of the conservative veil a symbol of faith or a symbol of revolution? Is it a rejection of modernity and if so what kind of modernity? How has the Islamic revolution affected your life? Moreover, is the wearing of the veil a barrier to work opportunities? The interviews with Shi'i women from Mashghara who enrolled in Hizbullah will elucidate these questions.

Part III will examine the influence of multiple religious and cultural traditions on the evolution of mentalities, whether the change is harmonious or dissonant for women in Lebanese Christian and Muslim communities. Since the sixteenth century, Christianity contributed dynamic intellectual and practical structures of progress in the unique Lebanese "formula." The challenge has always been how to blend subtly modern conveniences with old and vulnerable traditions. The theme of dialogue between religions and cultures has always been at the heart of the Lebanese issue. Lebanon signifies a real synthesis of the questions related to Arab modernity. Are each religious group's international allegiances negatively affecting Lebanese national unity and sovereignty? It is crucial that the change that is currently taking place continue this message of progress while maintaining the international vocation of Lebanon. This research attempts to increase understanding of divergent points of view rather than portray one side as a detriment to progress. I take a unique approach in examining and describing Lebanese modernity; here, the evolution of society is looked at through the lens of women of different religious communities. My interview with young Shi'i women and the official who works at the library annexed to the mosque in Haret Hreik—the headquarters of Hizbullah in southern Beirut—as well as my interview with *Ustaz,* a former high school principle,[19] on the transformation of women's

lives in the last two decades is included. Also included is my interview with one of Saghbine's Maronite priests, who elaborated on the Lebanese message of religious coexistence, secularism, and the change that took place during the two phases of my research.

This volume takes into account historic and regional evolution, cultural identity, and openness to the West to discuss the status of women in Lebanon. A country of old traditions, multiple languages, a myriad of customs, and two monotheistic religions comprising 18 religious sects, Lebanon is primarily an expression of history and modern times. The religious element has recently become a dimension of international reality. Actors on the international scene have testified to this; this is exemplified by Pope John Paul II's statement during his visit to Lebanon in 1997: "Lebanon is more than a country, Lebanon is a message." Mohammad Khatami, the former president of Iran, identified Lebanon in 2008 as the country of cultural dialogue. Lebanon constitutes a model rather than a difficult convolution. The aim of coexistence is to intensify solidarity between Lebanese communities rather than intensify sectarianism. After all, the Lebanese identity is the product of a multitude of cultural and religious contributions. The political vacuum of the civil war years in Lebanon not only promoted a religious identity but also politicized it to the detriment of a national identity. Keeping in mind the mission of Lebanon, Muslim and Christian Lebanese women ought to primarily value their national identity while negotiating the delicate compromise between politics and religion. Pluralism is at the core of the Lebanese idea.

Finally, the current divergence between Christian and Muslim women related to the religious resurgence is no more than a passing phase, perhaps an adjustment of a secular civilization in crisis. Fortunately, the majority of young women believe in the future. Perhaps the future will see a reversal of the divergence between these two groups and the formation of a more inclusive civil society and a more unified Lebanese identity.

This book aims to prove that the unity of Lebanon can be looked at through the lens of the evolution of women. The two topics being intertwined, the more women's issues and rights advance, the more the commonalities found among women of different socioreligious groups, the more convergence can emerge and be achieved.

PART I

Saghbine, a Christian Village: Women, Religion, and Society

CHAPTER 1

Geography and Religious Spaces

Many people agree that the villager is a creation of the land that he or she occupies. In general, there are very few distinctions between Christian villagers and Muslims villagers from a sociological standpoint. Yet geography is not the only factor in determining the characteristics of a village, and the exceptional Christian villages that differ from Muslim villages are far from rare. Saghbine is one of these striking exceptions. We will more closely examine how the human aspect of village life presents itself in its geographic framework.

The morphological study begins with what can be observed and perceived of the social reality. I begin with a geographical analysis of the region, which must be studied from the standpoint of the inhabitants who use it and give it life. Next, I turn to the human geographic characteristics of the region—how it is constructed, what buildings, including religious ones, are the most important, and which have a great influence in crafting the destiny of the people. Finally, I will describe the religious affiliations and languages of Saghbine. The goal of this morphological study is twofold: one part will analyze certain aspects of daily life; the other will examine the status of women, which will be the subject matter of chapters to follow. But first, to understand women we need to understand the physical space.

Geographic Location

Spanning 10,400 km^2, Lebanon occupies an honorable position in the eyes of the United Nations member states. As small as it is, it has never gone unnoticed or unappreciated. Although it is a small country on the geographic scale, its social complexity could characterize an entire world. Yes, it is a world on a miniature scale, but a complete world, where all stages of civilization exist,

ranging from societies with low levels of development to their counterparts at the extreme limit of refinement.

Its shape, harmonious and proportionate, and the existence of a natural border (most notably in the east) deem Lebanon a geographic entity that is well-defined and unique. This small country makes up 200 km of the eastern shore on the Mediterranean Sea. It presents itself as a coastal band, a flat surface in between the sea and mountains that widens in nine places to form the planes occupied by the historically prosperous regions of Tyre, Sidon, Damour, Beirut, Jounieh, Byblos, Batroun, Tripoli, and Akkar.

The mountains are grounded in the coastline, with bases rooted just inland of the Mediterranean that transform into gently curving slopes, lacking in severity but carefully crafted and constantly reshaped by erosion. These mountains reach an altitude of 1,800 meters in the south and 3,000 meters in the north. The rivers caress the countryside with their torrential rhythms and high speeds from January to June. They cut through deep valleys, carving limestone as their winding waters make their descent and empty into the sea.[1] The limestone plateau, a karst in all of its youthfulness, is covered by snow for three or four months out of the year. It separates the Mediterranean coast from the Bekaa Valley. This majestic relief contributes to the asymmetrical structure of Lebanon. It divides the country into two distinct climates: one that is gentle and temperate on the shores of the Mediterranean, and the other that is dry and continental on the vast plains of the Bekaa Valley that span 145 kilometers. The last chain of mountains, the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, with their supple form, without contrast and without vegetation, collapse at the horizon of the Lebanese-Syrian border.

The division of the country is based upon five *mouhafazat*,[2] or principalities: Central, Northern, Southern, Eastern Lebanon, and Beirut. Eastern Lebanon is defined by the demarcation of the Bekaa Valley. From the north to the south across the continuous mountainous relief, important climate and sociological differences distinguish between four zones to which the administrative capitals of the region have given their names.

We begin with Hermel; this zone is formed by a triangle. It spans to the north of the Bekaa where it occupies the entire Qada'[3] of Hermel and the northern part of the Qada' of Baalbeck. The triangle is marked with a desert-like climate, formerly lending to a weak population density that was barely open to the outside world until 1979, when Musa el-Sadr politicized the Shi'i of Lebanon and the Iranian Revolution launched the Shi'i in this part of the Bekaa into the international arena.

Baalbeck is characterized by imposing temples that stand among monumental ruins that represent the legacy of the Roman Empire in the Levant. Known internationally for its vast and varied horizon, Baalbeck was a

destination for thousands of tourists every year, although the stream of visitors was interrupted during the Civil War. In 1982, 1,500 Iranian revolutionary guards were sent to this city, specifically to encourage the political movement of the militant Shi'i of Lebanon who made Baalbeck their base. Although their headquarters has since moved to Beirut, Baalbeck remains a Hizbullah stronghold, boasting a museum that greets tourists as they enter the site of historic ruins.

The capital of the Bekaa is Zahle, found in the center and south of the Bekaa. The Bekaa used to be characterized by the influence of its Christian capital, which has since weakened due to the Islamic revival movements and growing strength of Hizbullah in the surrounding area. Zahle was formerly known for its economic and agricultural wealth and remains more densely populated than other parts of the Bekaa.

The tangible differences between the east and west of the Bekaa divide the region into Charki and Gharbi.[4] The Charki comprises about 20 villages with mostly Muslim and Druze inhabitants, with Christians concentrated in only two of the villages. By contrast, in the Gharbi, the majority of inhabitants are Christian and the minority are Muslim. It is worth noting that these villages boast Christians living with a minority of Sunnis, or Christians living with a minority of Shi'i. In the Bekaa as well as in all of the villages of Lebanon, you will seldom find Sunnis and Shi'is occupying the same village.

We have now arrived at Saghbine, a Christian village in the Western Bekaa on the side of Mount Lebanon. It is economically self-sufficient and the most socially developed village of the region. Its most striking factor is the cultural evolution of its population and its openness to the outside. Here, the status of women is close to that of the most evolved districts of Lebanon.

Saghbine, vast and bountiful in its variety, is built 1,050 meters above sea level on a promontory resting on the foothills of the Marasty mountain chain. The seductive curves of the Litani River, which has now been transformed into a lake, capture the attention and wonder of the travelers who encounter it. As a modest country village, Saghbine would not evoke the curiosity of passing travelers if not for its aesthetic qualities. However, an ethnographer or academic researching the village would find a complex sociological structure that merits both interest and attention.

The transformation of the Litani River into a lake not only changed the aesthetics of the Bekaa and the area around Saghbine, but simultaneously altered the psyche of the residents of the surrounding villages. The majestic blue color and calmness of the water, so still and beautiful as if it were captured in a painting, softened the dryness of the climate and the roughness of Saghbine's residents. Its inhabitants and visitors do not hesitate to call the river *ferdaws* (paradise) because of the warmth of its welcome.

The etymology of Saghbine remains ambiguous; according to A. Freiha and A. Morhej, Saghbine, or *zu'pin*, seems to be derived from the root found in Aramaic and Hebrew: *za'f*, which means anger and enthusiasm.[5] The popular etymology deserves attention, because it represents the opinions held by people of their own village. Residents of Saghbine communally claim that "Saghbine" is a word with Arab roots; *sagh bayn*, as it is spelt in Arabic, means "wise men in between [unwise men]." Yet toponyms usually derive their names from the character of their location instead of the character of their inhabitants, especially since these inhabitants have established themselves in these places as recently as the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the characterization of the inhabitants of Saghbine based on the town's etymology seems to hold true: the villagers are known for their physical and mental strength.

Human Geographic Framework

The physical aspect of the village determined the system of communication (roads and transport) and the mode of living. Located 75 km from Beirut, it is connected to the city's capital by a national route linking Beirut to Chtoura at the mouth of the Bekaa, followed by small country roads that link Chtoura to the inner cities of the Bekaa. Saghbine has been linked to the outside world with modern means of transportation since the 1950s. From the Middle Ages until the introduction of the automobile in Lebanon, only the national road from Beirut to Chtoura existed. To access the Western Bekaa, the Ottomans carved out small country roads that could be traversed by donkeys and horses in 1830. My grandfather was a notable resident of Saghbine, and in order to marry my grandmother at the turn of the twentieth century, he had to take his horse to the village of Zahle to bring his new wife to his village—a trip that in total took over 20 hours! Today, an average trip from Beirut to Saghbine takes an hour and a half by car along these same country roads that were enlarged and covered in asphalt about 50 years ago.

Saghbine's access to the outside world is pertinent to the sociological development of the village because it meant a link to the modernity of Beirut and opened it up to the influence of the transformation of the role of women in Beirut's urban setting. Saghbine thus gained an advantage over other villages of the Bekaa who lived in relative isolation.

Our village was first populated by small groups of immigrants who entered intermittently at a less than spectacular rate. These groups were drawn by the natural resources of the terrain, and most particularly its proximity to a large water source. The exact date of these migrations is unknown, but

it is approximated to have occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century. The first immigrants were Christians; however, the Superior of the Saint-Savior Monastery of Saghbine affirms that the Druze were the first to inhabit this area. The most notable inhabitants were the Jumblatt family, from whom the Christians bought the piece of land that would become their village. A document dated in 1862 affirms this purchase and can be found at the Melkite archdiocese in Zahle. The oldest part of Saghbine is referred to as *Saidat et kherbene*, or "Our Lady, the Abandoned," denoting its founding for Christians by Christians. According to the Superior, this part of town was burned down three times by the Druze before 1860. The *deir* or monastery, of Saghbine, Saint Savior, was built in two stages; the first floor was built in 1780 and the second floor in 1880. That same year, the Chapel dedicated to Saint Theresa was also built.[6]

The year 1824 was declared the year of penitence; residents asked Father Gabriel El-Khoury, who is my ancestor, to distribute communion in the form of thin hosts instead of pieces of bread, which was used prior to that occasion. Father El-Khoury distributed communion for three days. The Superior confirmed the existence of Saghbine as a Christian village in 1836; the evidence comes from the Bishop of Zahle who, in that year, identified a litigation between two families contending for the administration of the church. The bishop resolved the question by delegating the responsibility to the *waqf* or church endowmen, Christians who, at that time, constituted the majority of the Lebanese population owned all the lands surrounding the Litani River until the town of Baaloul. However, as of 1982 at the heart of the Lebanese Civil War, the same statistics indicated that the same districts of the Bekaa now comprised 40 percent Christians and 60 percent Muslims.[7]

Outside the village, whose center consists of two square kilometers, we find other lands belonging to the territory, which occupy 114,000 *dennum*,[8] or 114,000,000 square meters. According to Henri Mendras, "Le finage désigne l'espace occupé et 'juridiquement' possédé par une collectivité, quel qu'en soit le mode d'appropriation."[9] The social structure of this town can be read on the terrain. We can read the history of the groupings of people who established their lives on this plateau that is limited by the territory of neighboring villages.

The land of Saghbine is fragmented into parcels that belong to different landlords; each family owns one of these parcels in every district, forming a closed collectivity. The indivisibility of the patrimony was the rigor for the continuity of the family unit and accentuated the supremacy of the head of the family unit and his ability to rule by his whim. This principle at present seems to be disappearing, giving way to Roman principles of law

that stipulates individual and total property ownership with the ability to divide lands between family members. This rule of equally dividing land has transformed the social and economic makeup of the village.

Saghbine is the administrative center of the Western Bekaa for the summertime, boasting a *serail*, or administrative palace that manages these affairs. The *serail* consists of an Office of Family Status, an Office of Finance, and the local police force and post office.

Religious Spaces

Lebanon is known as an asylum to the different religiously oppressed communities of the region—whether Shi'i or Maronites. Most Christians established themselves in the northern part of the country and in the mountains early in Lebanon's history, and the Shi'i settled in the south around 1840. The Sunni came to the prosperous coastal cities and settled there.

Villages in Lebanon were established and grew around monasteries. This phenomenon instilled the religious nature of the Lebanese people—from priests and brotherhoods to the sisterhoods and the women and men who never missed any morning or evening daily prayers, or constantly participated in all holy sacraments of the Church.

In the past, religious spaces determined social spaces. Saghbine consisted of two districts: the first began at the current Notre Dame Church and spanned the abandoned[10] Notre Dame chapel, at the south of the village. The region is open to the surrounding plains and the center of the Melkites. The second began at the Church of Saint George, situated on a hill overlooking the village and continuing up the mountain—the center for the Maronite[11] community. It seems that these communities dedicated their churches to these saints in order to associate the courage and strength with the Virgin Mary, the symbol of maternity and love. The destiny of the people of Saghbine was to be representative of Christianity in the Bekaa. Collectively, the people of the village seem to cohabitate in an intense community, represented by the closeness of homes built one on top of the other, and expressed by a collective individualism and a focus on themselves and their community.

Today, the toponym of the region reveals the presence of 24 family groups, since regions are mainly named after families. Places are also named after natural resources, most often water, marking its significance. Public names, such as *saha*, meaning "public square," are becoming more common, indicating the evolution and modernization of society.

Religious spaces in the villages consist of churches, the *qontoche*, or rectory, cemeteries, and chapels. In Saghbine, two churches belong to the Maronites: Saint George, the older of the two churches, is three centuries old. Its

antiquity is marked by its two entrance doors: one for men and one for women, who, until the latter half of the twentieth century, were required to sit at the back of the church. As villagers pass the church, they often stop to kiss the blessed stones on the side of the church—a ritual that often leaves red lipstick marks on the church's walls. As a little girl, on the way from the house located at the top of the hill to the public square, I never missed the chance to accomplish this religious duty. The cornerstone marked with the date of the church's construction was removed by some inhabitants following a dispute between two families over the management of the church; this behavior and the dominance of the village by large families is an indication of the remnants of feudalism. However, until recently, this church was only opened for visitors and not for religious services, until Joseph Rouphael, a rich inhabitant of Saghbine, renovated the church so that it is now open for services. The second church, also called Saint George, was built 38 years ago to parallel the church from which it takes its namesake, and to house religious celebrations.

The Melkites also possess two churches dedicated to Notre Dame that resemble those of the Maronites. This emulation drove them to undertake and execute the same project. The cornerstone marking the date of the old church's construction was also removed due to disputes between Melkite families seeking the management of the church. The construction of the new church as a second story of the same building was finished a decade ago.

All these churches share the same architecture, constructed of large meticulously carved stones, in a rectangular plan with a terrace on the flat roofs where the church bells are rung. This bell, sitting on a square frame, is supported by four pillars joined together by arches and supports a dome and cross that sit above it. The youngest of the villagers have the honor to ring the bell, a task that often requires the weight of their full bodies. The sound is carried into the air to summon churchgoers on Sundays. To the villagers, there is nothing more touching than the sound of these familiar bells to announce the beginning of mass on Sundays. The bells themselves do not have the same significance for everyone, as each person is drawn to the bells that represent their own churches. Yet today, the sounds are more tolerant; both masses are open to both religious groups, though most villagers remain faithful to their own churches.

Unlike the exterior, the interior architecture of the churches is totally different. The interior of Saint George reveals the Maronite link to its Western influence, while Notre Dame reflects its Byzantine heritage. The entryways of both antique churches were built during the Ottoman Empire; their low height indicates the measures taken by church builders to prevent the Turks from entering the church on their horses. The two parishes each possess in their vicinities a hall and a square that serve as meeting areas for spectators

and participants at official ceremonies such as weddings, baptisms, memorial services, and so on.

Other small private churches called *cabellas*, or chapels, belong to certain families of Saghbine, emphasizing the importance of religion in day-to-day life. The main cemetery was formerly located in the north of the village but then was moved to the south. Only the El-Khoury family, descendants of Father Gabriel, owns their own cemetery that is situated behind the land belonging to the family. In Lebanon, Christians are buried in tombs above the surface of the earth instead of underground. Family members are laid to rest next to each other in tombs belonging to the family. In general, tombs are not well-managed, and are only adorned with flowers on the occasion of a funeral of another family member, or on All Souls Day, the Francophone version of the Day of the Dead.

A niche dedicated to Saint Theresa at the entrance of the village states *mantakat el mezar*, or "visitors' place"—the name identifying the area surrounding the niche. The term "visitors" indicates visitors of the saint, who come to her niche to pray. In this Christian village, religious icons are used to mark places around the town, another indication of the relevancy of religion to everyday life. The statue of Saint Theresa and the cross on the top of the dome that envelops her protects the inhabitants and visitors as much as it protected the women who built them.

This religious context explains the high rate of devotion of the Lebanese population. Churches are full for masses every Sunday, and even more for Christmas or Easter celebrations. On Holy Thursday, the faithful visit seven churches draped for the circumstance by women and receive the host at each church, in addition to the more widespread practice of having their feet washed by the priest. The faith of Lebanese women seems to have been remarkably deep-seated, for both Muslim and Christian women strongly believe in the power of God. The only difference resides in the fact that Muslim women still do not attend Mosques for Friday prayers, or other religious events such as funerals.

The population of Saghbine is Catholic, from the Maronite and Melkite rites. The people proudly call themselves Lebanese Christians, a title that contrasts with their Muslim and Druze neighbors. Like all of the Lebanese, these villagers come from diverse backgrounds, although it is difficult to pinpoint their exact origin.

If the purity of a human race is altogether a myth, this notion is particularly evident in this region of incoming winds and intermingling of people. Our country was "fashioned in history with the lively stones of tormented soil and of a family of people, for a soul, a culture, a way to be human."[12] To be honest with history, Corban ascertains that "the church of Arabs is local and

disjointed."[13] The most typical example of this situation is that of the church of Lebanon: covering 10,000 km^2 with a million and half Christians, almost all of the churches of the Orient and the West are represented.

In the realm of Catholic churches, two churches emerge due to their numerical importance and the age of their installation in Lebanon: The Maronite Church and the Greek-Catholic Orthodox, or Melkite Church. The Maronite Church owes its name to a saint originally from Anchorite named Maron who lived during the second half of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century. The monastery of Saint Maron, founded by the disciples of the hermit in the years following his death, initiated the first headquarters of this community. We now find these disciples dispersed in the region of Homs on the border of Oronte.[14] From here, the followers gained territory in Northern Lebanon and the Kesrwan Mountain where they took root and spread. The five Maronite families who where drawn to the mountain where Saghbine is now located were beckoned by the need for subsistence. The fertility of the soil and the plains of the Bekaa promised abundant harvests, and they fertilized the ground to pay the *ouchour*, or tax, to the Ottomans.

The Melkite Catholics divide themselves into two autonomous groups; one group is attached to the Phanar and is known as "Orthodox," while the other is faithful to Rome, which has essentially monopolized the Melkite rite[15] since the eighteenth century. After traveling from Houran or Syria, they settled across the southern and eastern parts of the mountains, and most notably in the rural parts of Saida, Tyre, and Zahle. Drawn by the same need for subsistence as the Maronites and in the same century, the Melkites made their way to Saghbine.

There are some historic vestiges found in the terrain of Saghbine, such as the grotto *Ain el Kamar*, which was carved and sculpted by water currents. The villagers take pride that their town is a part of history, as the first settlers installed themselves around the grotto at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As the mountain of Kesrwan became overpopulated, the ancestors of these villages became sharecroppers for the Druze in the neighboring towns of Chouf and Rachaya. The history of the village is therefore tied to the needs of the villagers, who were drawn to the fertile plains of the Bekaa from the rocky terrain of the Kesrwan mountain—a center that was and still is the fief for the Lebanese Christians.

In addition to the Maronites and Melkites, a miniscule community of around 50 Protestants currently occupies Saghbine. The origin of Lebanese Protestantism goes back to the nineteenth century when British and American missions were particularly active in the Orient, and their efforts resulted in the conversion of a few villagers, most of whom were

originally Greek Orthodox. The Protestant community of Saghbine is linked to the American Presbyterian Church. They took their dissatisfaction with the priests of the village on affairs concerning the management of the church as reasons to change their affiliation. Indeed, a member of the family Aboussouan, who was nominated to be *wakil el-waqf*, or manager of the pious endowment of the Melkite Church, was accused of stealing funds and was henceforth discharged of his duty; in order to take revenge, he converted to Protestantism. His daughter married a member of the Mahfoud family who also adopted this new allegiance. These proselytes allied themselves with the Boustany family of Chouf, known for their participation in the *Nahda* or the Arab cultural renaissance. With their help, the Protestant Mission was able to enter the education domain of Lebanon, founding a school in 1870.[16] The inhabitants of Saghbine recognized that the Mission and its method of instruction and level of education both demanded merit; yet the Mission was not alone in this domain, for the Maronites and Melkites had already established their own schools. The Mission was reduced to paying its adherents to maintain their allegiance to Protestantism. As of late, the Protestant families of Saghbine have a tendency to go back to their original allegiance to the Maronite or Melkite Church, and their school has now become a public school in the absence of Protestant missionaries.

According to Yazigi, the education of women was one of the major endeavors of the Presbyterian Mission, which is also accredited with the foundation of the first school for girls during the Ottoman Empire, opening in 1833 in Beirut. After World War I, the schools managed by the Mission spread to different regions in response to the increased demand for the education of Lebanese women. In elementary schools, instruction was carried out in Arabic, with French and English studied as secondary languages. Lessons and homework, exercises of every type, games and work requiring physical engagement were administered side by side with the teaching of the Bible, arithmetic, geography, natural sciences, Arabic reading passages, music, writing, and more.[17]

The languages of the educated people, of culture and learning during the first seven centuries of our era were Greek, Aramaic, and Syriac. The decline of the Hellenistic and Aramaic cultures was paralleled by the progressive dissemination of Arabic culture and language. Syriac was widely used by the Christians and was adopted as the language to represent this religion, yet was slowly eliminated by the invasion of Arabic culture and language. Indeed, the priests recited masses and prayers in Syriac, the ancient language derived from Aramaic—the language of Jesus. It was not until 1955 that the Arabic language replaced Syriac in Lebanese Maronite churches, and until now the

consecration is still said in Syriac. Arabic become common to all of the people of different regions of Lebanon and of course, the Middle East, though each group used it differently with variations of vocabulary and style. The dialect of Arabic spoken is Saghbine is characterized by the dropping of the letter qaf, and replacing it with a hamza, or a sound similar to that of an A. By contrast, the Druze always pronounce the letter "qaf." The Lebanese dialect of Saghbine is clear and extremely articulate; the accents of surrounding villages differ from that of Saghbine, although villagers joke that these variations were caused by the water.

The population is organized into nine family groups who each have a profound awareness of their individuality. Villagers refer to their family groups as "bayt," which means "our own." The Maronite community consists of five ancestral lines subdivided into families, whereas the Melkite community is organized into four family lines. Protestant families comprise a minority in the village. Maronites are the most numerous, as Saghbine consists of 62 percent Maronites, 34 percent Melkites, and 4 percent Protestants.

In addition to these family lines, Saghbine boasts a community of nuns and elementary school teachers who come from all over Lebanon. For 20 years and into the Lebanese Civil War of 1975–1990, the priest of the Maronite church was from a neighboring village, yet today, the tradition of the Saghbine El-Khoury family providing the village priest has been reinstated. My uncle, an El-Khoury, served as the priest of Saint Maron church of Beirut—the official Maronite church of Lebanon—for 40 years; I remember his stories of my ancestors from the El-Khoury family line who were priests of Saghbine. The Melkites did not always have a priest from their own village; monks from Saint Savoir would come to administer sacraments and celebrate mass. Today, the Melkites have a priest from Saghbine.

Demographics and Immigration

The youth of the population of Saghbine is evident; Lebanon in general has the demographic gift of more births than deaths, and more young people than older people, according to the mayor's records. However, his registry is incomplete because the majority of people who call Saghbine their hometown live in Beirut. Births in Saghbine and in all of Lebanon increased after World War I. The war ravaged the citizens of Saghbine, causing famine, illness, and deaths in a land known for its fertility. The Turks particularly punished the Maronites, accusing them of having sympathies for France. Their treasonous allegiance led them to be deprived of rations, supplies, and any external aid—a fate that was particularly treacherous since the land was overrun and consumed by locusts. The memory of these years of war still

resonates with terror in the souls of these villagers, for each family suffered in some capacity.

The immigration movement is particularly notable in the case of Lebanon, as any immigration has a significant impact on a very small population. Christians leaving Lebanon and the Middle East in large number at this time did not trouble the Turks.

The 1960s were prosperous years in Lebanon. High levels of education and the rural exodus pushed villagers into the city, marking a period of good economic standing until the beginning of the Civil War in 1975. The Lebanese relocated from the country to the city, instead of leaving the country altogether as was seen in previous years and again on the onset of the Lebanese Civil War.

"Les montagnes d'Epire et du Liban . . . ont depuis longtemps vécu grâce à leurs émigrés."[18] The influx of immigrants transforms the social life of the village. Immigrants compete to throw the best parties and to give the most extravagant gifts to their family and to the village. This is how we explain the contrast between a barren landscape, a weak agriculture, rich houses, the refinement of the social mores, and the knowledge of the world in these "valleys thought to be isolated from roads and forgotten by those on the exterior."[19]

It is difficult to calculate the number of immigrants who have currently left Lebanon considering their dispersion across five continents. They are distributed across the Americas, most notably in the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Africa, across Australia and Africa, and most recently across the Middle Eastern nations that produce oil. Not one family knows the exact number of its members overseas. However, what is sure is that the number of immigrants, their children, and their grandchildren in different parts of the world is superior to the number of those in Lebanon. It is said that ten million Lebanese expatriates are scattered all over the world, while five million remain in Lebanon. Many families in Saghbine have fewer members in the village than in foreign countries.

Lebanese immigrants to the United States left in large numbers since the beginning of World War I in 1914. They adapted to American life and settled in the New World; some never went back. A number of them acquired a standard of living that they could not obtain in Lebanon, and reached extremely high levels of economic success. Villagers of Saghbine claim one of their own as a prestigious owner of a potato chip industry in Akron, Ohio, where a street is named after him. Impregnated with the social mores of the Lebanese countryside and their simple and robust character, they taught their children the language of their country while learning to speak English. They passed on their values of the importance of family and lived as they did in their villages

in Lebanon. They would marry someone from their village or go back to Lebanon to find someone from their village of origin. Their children, however, lost the customs that their parents so vehemently tried to preserve and replaced them with the Western mode of living. The legacy of the Christian Lebanese is seen in the abundance of Maronite churches, which are located in every major city of the United States.

The immigrants to Brazil and Argentina also left Lebanon during World War I, although these immigrants were less numerous and almost instantly made fortunes and soon returned to their villages. The reason of their quick departure seems to be the harshness of the weather, the political instability of their host countries, and most notably, their inability to fully integrate themselves into the new society. Immigration to Australia has become more common in the last two decades. Many young people left their villages and petty jobs for this New World. Due to their hard work, intelligence, and resilience, they very quickly rose in the ranks of their enterprises. These immigrants frequently return to visit their villages to which they feel an allegiance; the majority of them hope to return to Lebanon permanently if the political and their economic situations would permit them to do so.

In addition to Western immigration, a large number of Lebanese immigrated to other Arab states. After the Lebanese Civil War, a large number of Lebanese immigrants chose the Middle East as their destination, with a concentration of immigrants in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. In the midst of the oil boom, these countries needed engineers, technicians, and manual labor, and took special interest in the intelligence and loyalty of the Lebanese, to whom they conferred many of their projects in return for relatively high salaries. Yet these immigrants only planned to work abroad for a short time in the booming economic climate and then return to their home country as soon as their fortune was assured.

Although the number of immigrants is unknown, their wealth has an influence on the disposable income of the village. Forty percent of the population is highly dependent upon these remittance payments earned by relatives abroad, since immigrants financially assist their parents, even if they are married in their new country of residence. Many immigrants pay for their relatives to join them overseas for a holiday or special occasion. These remittances are crucial to sustaining the quality of living of the villagers.

Properties and other goods belonging to those who leave Lebanon are never rented out, but are left to family members who live in the space by *wakale*, or proxy, which gives them the freedom to manage the property and does not require rent. Naturally, the period in which properties could not be divided between family members sometimes made this arrangement difficult.

Yet in this case, a primordial solidarity to the needs of the situation always took precedence over ancient customs.

In sum, this historical overview places the constitution of Saghbine as a village in the seventeenth century. People were able to adapt to their environment to ensure a sustained livelihood. Because of the roads built relatively early to open the lines of communication, the population advanced more than its neighboring villages. The human geography of the village especially reveals the presence of family groups. This village habitat offers a diversity of architecture, boasting churches and houses that vary in design and structure presented in juxtaposition to each other. Ethnically, the village comprises a Christian population of both Maronites and Melkites. The demographics show a population that is youthful, a sure indication of social changes, and evidence one of the major problems confronted by many Lebanese: immigration.

How Does Modernity Translate to the Women of the Village?

Practicing religion has remained strong for women from the village. Indeed, the rural exodus, direct cause of modernization in their lives ameliorating their education, social relation, and economic opportunities, has not diminished the spiritual fervor of women; piety does not stand in the path of modernity. On the contrary, the rural exodus has been changing the face of churches in the city. In recent history, rural families moved from villages to the city because of political unrest. They brought with them their piety and rural traditions of practice, and their high attendance to daily masses. City churches became filled to the extreme. The increase in demand for churches caused the Lebanese Christians to build more churches, or renovate and enlarge existing ones in order to accommodate the increasing number of faithful. For reunions of main holidays and saint days, women, men, and children all participate in religious practices; however, women accomplish the most their religious duties. In the obituary celebration, women participate more in the prayers, for they recite prayers at the house and around the deceased body. Unlike the customs in the United States, deceased persons in Lebanon are kept in the house and buried the next day.

Recently, the Lebanese have spent millions of dollars enlarging churches and mosques. In the small district of Ashrafieh in Beirut there are ten Catholic and Orthodox churches. A profound religious aspect has shaped the Lebanese personality for coexistence, cooperation, and dialogue and does not appear to be changing any time soon.

A change from traditional practice to modern ones has, however, occurred in the Maronite Church. Women were earlier forbidden to approach the

altar or help the priest in the celebration; these tasks were reserved for boys and men. Women were required to wear an "écharpe" when entering churches and to sit in the rear part of the church reserved for them, for the church was divided by a cloisonné and the front part was designated for men only. An evolution occurred after Vatican II, which modernized the Catholic Church and allowed young girls and women to hold incensories, recite the readings, and even give communion. Christian women are still very active in spiritual organizations, such as the Sisterhood of the Immaculate Conception—an organization influenced by the Jesuits.

Finally, immigration, which has been contributing to a higher standard of living in the village, also brought elements of Western modernization to the village. First-generation emigrants remain attached to their families and send financial assistance to help siblings educate their children in private schools and elderly parents have a dignified old age. The interaction brought an ineluctable opening to Western modernity, lifestyles, and thoughts. A modernity welcomed by most villagers who are proudly opening up to Western ways of life and thinking.

Another important element of modernity is the formation of Public Square where young men and women can gather although chaperoned by adults. The Ministry of Education has implemented a new method of educating the rural population through the use of cinematography projected in the public square. To my surprise, while in the village in the summer of 2009, the projection of the movie "Caramel," a rather feminist movie, a warm and optimistic chronicle depicting modernity tainted with traditions, was watched by villagers so as to develop critical thinking of young women and men vis-à-vis traditions inconsistent with the demand of modern times.

This human geographic framework constitutes the basic criteria that will allow us to discern the evolution in the status of the women of Saghbine, Lebanese women in general and Muslim women in particular. It was necessary to set the context prior to the analysis to examine women's daily life in the space we described. To understand women we need to understand the physical space. I will now turn to the social structure of the village, and women's roles specifically.



Figure 1.1 After-church gathering: At the entrance of St. Georges Old Church in 1952, family members, Saghbine's villagers, and Muslim villagers from the neighboring villages gather around the candidate for congress Georges Khoury and his newly wed wife Georgette.

CHAPTER 2

Childhood and Adolescence of Young Girls

The United Nations proclaimed 1975 as the International Year of the Woman, in order to promote the new efforts to engage the entire world in the struggle against "discrimination denoting women as the victims."[1] The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released a balance sheet demonstrating the progress in the area of women's rights over the last 30 years and laying out the path for a future in which women can actually participate in every country of the world in a social, political, economic, and cultural sense, and most importantly, in the same capacity as men.

The subject of women's rights continues to attract much attention, most notably in the West where the participants of the feminist movement incessantly publish document after document on the issue. However, the goal of this chapter is not to analyze the various internal debates of feminism, but, rather, to outline the changes in the status of Lebanese women as the woman of Saghbine experienced them.

To speak of just one concept for women is a pure figment of the imagination that does not have any philosophical significance. The concept of being concerns men as well as women, although ancient scholars have always defined humanity by the absolute masculine type, while the woman is held down by everything that is specific to her sex. "The woman is female by virtue of a lack of certain qualities," they claim, "We must consider the character of women as suffering from a natural deficiency." Saint Thomas followed suit by declaring that woman is a "lacking man"—an "occasional being." For the existentialists, the woman essentially appears to the male as a sexualized being. She determines and differentiates herself in relation to men. "She is inessential in the face of the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute: she is the Other . . . The category of the Other is as fundamental as her own conscience,

the alterity or 'otherness' is a fundamental category in human thought."[2] History has bestowed upon the woman her subordination. However, a situation created over time can be undone and reconstructed in a different way.

Sexism, which is both a mode of behavior and an ideology, perpetuates the subordination of women. It allows man to maintain his superiority in addition to ascribing to him his masculine qualities and all the privileges that come along with it. When looking for support for the justifications for the most disparate behavior of men, "the [gender disparity] has widened throughout every period of history . . . texts pretending to be in the fields of religion, science, history and philosophy . . . have 'established' the necessity of the subordination of women."[3] Arguments of "nature," "reason," "justice," and "force" have added themselves to the amalgamation. These sophisms yielded the prejudices of a patriarchal society, as if a true metaphysical inferiority was weighing down the woman.

Philosophers have added their grain of salt to oppose women—women are tasked with reproduction, that is to say, the perpetuation of the existing world, yet, their contribution is still considered subordinate to that of men, who have the noble charge of production as the sources of all humanity's "progress" and of all "advancement."

Economists, through their "scholarly" speculations on the distinction between "productive work" and work that is "unproductive," have built on this philosophical vision. They have successfully classified the "domestic" woman as "unproductive," and society as "dualistic." Two worlds are in juxtaposition: one is exterior, public, and masculine and the other, interior, domestic, and feminine.

In general, this analysis can be verified in many societies and civilizations including the former Western/Occidental bourgeoisie. Yet, first, we must ask the question: what do we mean by the status of women in Saghbine? What we mean is this society's conception of the status and the role that should normally fall to a woman. Which tasks are suitable for a woman in the eyes of society? What are the feminine forms of conduct that the collectivity tolerates, recognizes, and recommends? This type of concrete questions clarifies our definition.

The study of women's status is of particular importance in Lebanon, because of the margin of variances that are tolerated. Society imposed certain models of conformity that seemed to narrow when relating to women, especially in villages, where their choices are restricted. Yet where there is total conformity, there is always deviance. "The direct character of 'social control,' the degree of obligation and the system of sanctions are such that they seem to speak of an unconscious social contract as opposed to a normative course of action."[4]

The diversity in ways of life and the conception of women changes from eye to eye. The conception of the woman as an eternal minor "who leaves the guardianship of her father to be placed under the guardianship of her spouse" is truer in the rural milieu than in urban society. The conceptions may also vary in the same village—from one quarter to another—according to the level of education of the family, and perhaps most predominately according to social classes or religious confession.

Furthermore, the reigning ideology instills in women an education such that they end up wishing the treatment that society has reserved for them. Those who try to live according to new formulas sacrifice their health and mental equilibrium.

The close examination of daily life in Saghbine has allowed us to understand the village's true social reality; it has also permitted us to situate feminine life within its frame, and to allow us have an intuition regarding the importance of woman's situation that we intend to study. Throughout the various stages of her life, we will see how a woman's contribution to the family community makes it dynamic and maintains the group's permanence.

The rural exodus leads to consequences that are not only simply of statistical importance. Curbing traditional rural society is not the only effect; it also fundamentally transforms the social structures and mentalities. Women city dwellers pride themselves on inventing and incarnating "civilization," but rural women refuse at the outset to imbibe these cultural models, which they judge to be corrupting. Therefore, the problem exists on the level of mentalities: "The mentality, from a societal point of view, constitutes the specific mental structure of each civilization, and from an individual point of view, it is a collection of ideas and of intellectual disposition integrated in the same individual, connected to each other by logical rapports and beliefs."[5]

Admittedly, traditionalism has many enthusiasts, who say with a sigh: "La femme se perd, la femme est perdue" [the woman loses her head, the women is lost/ruined/undone]. They no longer know if they should wish for this change or not. Where is women's place in society? What positions should they occupy? Everything becomes complicated, changing a great deal and quickly: since certain women live materially and morally in a different way, they integrate change, accompanying and even organizing it. Traditionalists cannot understand why so many women of the younger generation are ready to renounce their natural right to be wives and mothers for the dubious privilege of competing with men in professional occupations.

In effect, it is sufficient to encounter certain families to notice that women are divided into two categories of individuals whose appearances, interests, and occupations are obviously different—perhaps these differences are

superficial, or maybe they are destined to disappear. What is certain is that they exist for the moment with striking evidence.

History has time and again shown us a reality that is particular to rural societies in Lebanon. Whether Christians or Muslims: the countrywoman's situation does not tend to be inferior to that of the man. The woman's status in such a society is therefore relatively better. The society of Saghbine was originally an agricultural community where women participated in production. Playing an important role in the economy, they always participated in men's responsibilities, were associated with his interests, and shared his property; they were respected, and often were the ones who effectively governed. Oftentimes, they have as much or more moral prestige than their husband, but their tangible condition is much more difficult because they take part in agricultural work and carry out hard domestic tasks.

Recently urbanized society has undergone a social mutation including the transformation of the traditional family structure. In the first phase, the modification of settlement led to a shift to anonymity among one's neighbors, creating the conditions of a new personal identity. This modification affected all members of the family: adults, adolescents, and children. The accelerated acculturation phenomenon created generation gaps at the heart of the family, with misunderstandings on several levels—notably on the moral level/ morality level. Emancipation of the younger generation, who were more concerned with truth than with appearance, conflicted with the adult generation's blind conventionality. Parents also felt obligated to control their daughters' outings and social associations more closely.

"On ne naît pas femme, on le devient" [One is not born a woman, one becomes it]. This statement does not have to do with what is understood as biological gender, but with "cultural" gender, which is to say the manner in which women are looked at with regard to their social status. The way that she perceives herself as a subject and attempts to actualize the image that she has of herself through the conditioning lens of an anonymous but present "other" in her daily activity is what defines a woman.

An outline of the stages that punctuate every human life will help us to better understand the Saghbine woman's being in her future development. An analysis of women's current conditions, beginning with childhood and continuing with adolescent development, family education, and school and university instruction follows. Then we will observe the married woman's situation, as well as that of the mother at the center of a family, bringing out the woman's role in social life. Finally, we will pass to the stages of maturity and old age.

Stratifying society on the basis of age allows us to identify certain trends in conduct that are characteristic of a particular category and situate it in

relation to others and to the collectivity. The traditional rural milieu as well as the urban milieu of Saghbine consists of four age groups—childhood, adolescence, married life, and old age—particularly discernible if one examines the behaviors of the individuals that form them, or of how other individuals behave toward other groups.

The First Years of Life

The childhood of young girls is happy and carefree, although their births are less welcome than those of a boy. Mothers closely oversee their children's education, reprimanding them for bad manners when necessary. In the first few years of life, there is not much difference in behavior between boys and girls. Both seek their parents' approval and affection, and enjoy being held and placed on their parents' laps. Around age three or four, girls appear to be better treated than their brothers are, since they continue to be cajoled by their parents, while boys are shown less physical affection. Many boys view this phenomenon as a rejection by their parents, although it is intended to teach them independence and virility.

The influence of education and the environment is vital in the child's development. In traditional Christian Lebanese rural societies, the young boy has an advantage during his development because he knows that others will depend on him, invoking a sense of responsibility and importance. He learns how to exist in the world through freedom and independence; even harmful or negative experiences contribute to developing his manliness. In contrast, young girls experience a conflict between autonomy and existence for others that begins during their childhood. They learn that in order to be appreciated by others, they must renounce their autonomy; they are treated as a doll—protected and fragile—because their liberty cannot be freely expressed. Mothers strive to integrate their daughters into the feminine world: as the proverb goes, *khoudou el banaat min soudour al ʿammaat*, or girls will be the image of their paternal aunt.[6] Mothers also raise their boys, but respect their masculinity, and boys escape and mature from their mothers' wings rather quickly.

The generous mother of Saghbine, who sincerely acts in her children's best interest, usually strives to make her daughter a "real woman" because society will more easily accept a traditional woman. In the village, mothers place young girls in the care of female teachers, impregnate them with knowledge of the feminine world, and encourage them to read books and play games that will launch them into their destiny. In short, society fills the ears of young girls with treasures of womanly wisdom and promotes female values such as respect for others, soft spokenness, charm, and purity. Until the

1970s, a traditional mentality emphasized the ability to cook, clean, and help around the house, yet the onset of urbanization has changed the perception of women's capacities. Now, families encourage their daughter to participate in sports and to succeed academically, although their brothers receive harsher reprimands than their sisters do. In fact, girls strive for a different type of success than boys; they strive to retain their femininity while they mature and try to succeed academically at the same time.

Today's women experienced a different childhood than their daughters. They lived in the domestic arena, helping their mothers around the house from a very young age while mothers excused their boys from any domestic responsibility. This work gave girls an opportunity to affirm themselves and establish an identity. The oldest sister was given the greatest responsibilities as early as the age of 12—not only helping her mother around the house, but also helping to raise her younger brothers and sisters—all of which bestowed upon her a sense of importance and domestic leadership that helped her assume her adult femininity. However, these responsibilities deprived her of living a carefree and innocent childhood, becoming an adult as an adolescent. Since her mother asked her to perform tasks within her capabilities, she did not complain, but, rather, took a sense of pride and shared in solidarity with adults. She volunteered to be important; she reasoned with those around her, gave orders, assuming an air of superiority toward her brothers and sisters and speaking to her mother as an equal.

Despite these compensations, she does not accept her destiny without regret. In the beginning, she accepts her motherly vocation, but the onset of her social maturity, academic demands, games, and readings takes her away from the maternal circle; she understands that men, not women, are the masters of this world. This revelation inevitably reverses the girl's perception of her role. In general, religion helps shape a young girl's identity, for religious influences often manifest themselves deeper in girls than in boys. It teaches them obedience and resignation, using the example of the Virgin Mary as a model for their terrestrial life.

These Christian rural women consider charming a man's heart to be a supreme necessity and central concern. Their quiet occupation around the house does not require their full mental devotion, and they often find their mind straying elsewhere, most likely in reveries of romance and marriage. Their excess of energy and unmet romantic expectations often translates into impatience, fits of anger, and tears; the latter display becomes a habit that many women develop because they learned from society to play the victim, which is simultaneously a protestation against their destiny and a way to make others aware of their emotions. These displays are not a consequence of the

mysterious female soul, but rather because of the situation imposed upon them since their childhood.

Indeed, these young girls will be spouses, mothers, grandmothers; they will run their houses exactly as their mothers did, and they will take care of their children the way their mothers raised them. At 12 her story is already written; she will discover this fact every day as she continues in the footsteps of her mother. She questions her predetermined future with sadness and accepts the reality of her upbringing with sorrow. Yet it is with joy that boys continue to rise to the dignity of manhood. What would have been more desirable for these future mothers—these young girls—is if their upbringing had taught them to challenge their destiny, without complacency and without shame.

The Upbringing of Young Girls

The young Lebanese Christian or Muslim girl who lives in a village stays in the house of her father, or, if he is dead, her brother—whose duty is to offer her hospitality, until her marriage. In the village, there is a collective concern for young girls, stemming from either a subconscious surveillance or simple curiosity. This surveillance goes beyond the family affairs, for every person in the village considers himself or herself to have the right to question others about their comings and goings. This interrogation is not abnormal for both parties concerned, and women commonly ask each other quite intimate questions. These village societies used to consider it inappropriate for a young girl to walk alone in the company of a young man, but a greater tolerance for this behavior has emerged in the present day. Yet young people have many opportunities to meet each other daily: on the street, at family or religious celebrations, or at parties hosted by people around the village.

These adolescent years, though sheltered, represent a period of transition for young girls; the future becomes a concrete reality as she waits to be married. Marriage is not only an honorable career, but one that is less tiring than most others, and it represents the opportunity for a woman to achieve her integral social dignity and to be an accomplished spouse and mother. This fate is what her community envisions for her, and this is what she wants for herself. This dominant mentality still manifests itself today, although the circumstances of women have changed.

The mothers of today's generation experienced an uneasy adolescence because they were forced to conform to traditional expectation and be dependent upon others at an age of hope and ambition—an age where the will to live and live fully is exalted with great enthusiasm, and when individuals seek to find their place and purpose in society. In an age where young girls are

ready to conquer the world, they learn that society will not permit them to conquer anything, and they must deny themselves their goals since their future depends on the decisions of men. They must cut off all of their vital and spiritual aspirations, which explains their difficulty in reattaining some internal stability and acceptance. Their fragile spirits, tears, and fits of nervousness are less a consequence of psychological fragility than a sign of an inability to adapt.

As a girl settles into the acceptance of her future, thoughts of a prospective husband cease to be romantic and she replaces them with practicality. She focuses on marriage instead of love—accepting that the two are not mutually exclusive. She no longer conjures up admirable qualities that fashion her image of her future husband, but replaces this dream with a yearning for stability. She seeks to take her position in society as a wife and live her life as an adult woman. Catching a husband becomes an urgent matter. An enormous social pressure pushes her to find a social place and purpose in her marriage. With these expectations, it seems natural that she does not strive to create a place for herself in the world outside of marriage.

Rural families and recently urbanized families with strong ties to their country origins practice this approach to raising their young and adolescent girls. Families who are new to the city continue most of their rural traditions and frequently gather in Beirut in the evenings to talk or play a round of cards—exactly as they did in the country. Urban families who have a long history in the city spare their daughters this rigorous education and lifestyle. Yet such families are few, constituting approximately 30 percent of the population. They allow their girls to live in relative openness to the outside world; the girls are frequently educated in liberal foreign schools in the Western style, are open to other societies, and acquire a different worldview than that of their more sheltered compatriots. They raise their children as individuals in line with the rights of liberty, autonomy, and personal development, regardless of the child's gender. Yet must the values that were once proposed to women in their country of origins be reexamined? What is important is an education that teaches pleasant conduct in society, cooperation with peers, and conviviality—in short, an education that promotes living side by side with others instead of against them. Most importantly, the family milieu creates a disposition that thrives in the realm of schools and universities.

The Historic Role of Christians in Education

The most influential factor in changing societies is without a doubt the level of instruction and culture to which we will now devote our reflection. In a strict sense, education has many sources, the most obvious of which

is schooling, but newspapers, the radio, television, Internet, and the skills and knowledge that one acquires by using technology also bolster education. The influence of education is decisive and is essential to transforming an individual's mentality vis-à-vis traditions.

Even during the childhood of today's mothers, a majority of Saghbine's residents could read and write; today, one would be hard-pressed to find an illiterate resident. Yet in the midst of doctors, lawyers, and engineers who have studied at prestigious institutions, combined with the simple agriculturalists, Saghbine boasts an array of educational levels. The latter may still decode letters and texts with difficulty, while the former constitute an educational elite. As in many parts of the world, education is, for the most part, the privilege of the rich and well to do.

There are three categories of schools in Lebanon: public schools, private national schools, and private foreign schools. The first category consists of official schools, commissioned by the government. Religious communities founded and continue to run most private national schools, with the exception of a few, which were created by laypeople. Before the Civil War, Christian and Muslim schools opened in communities with a large number of followers of either faith, yet these schools accepted students of all religions. Since Saghbine and its surrounding villages were predominately Christian, private schools were all Christian. The lack of Muslim private schools led Muslim families to send their children to the public schools, which become by default predominately Muslim, although some still attended Christian private schools. Even Muslims from surrounding villages came to the Christian schools of Saghbine, which was for many years a center for education in the Bekaa. Yet after the rise of the Lebanese Shi'a population in the 1980s, Muslim families of surrounding villages stopped sending their children to Saghbine for schooling. For example, Masghara, a village whose majority is now Shi'i but that used to be predominately Christian at 60 percent, witnessed an exodus of Christian villagers due to the influence of the Hizbullah militia on the Christian population of the village. It is now only 5 percent Christian, but the school run by the *Sœurs des Saints-Cœurs* is still open to educate the local Shi'i majority.

Priests and Lebanese religious congregations manage the national private schools. In contrast, foreign schools have French or Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, hold classes in French or English, and follow the national school systems of France or the United States. The majority of foreign schools are French; in the mountains, religious citizens still run these schools. They differ from public and nonreligious private schools because they impart an understanding of the Western cultural tradition and teach their students to reach high levels of proficiency in French and/or English.

Only 5 percent of private schools in the mountains taught English instead of French until 1970; today around 30 percent of rural private schools teach classes in English. In Selim Abou's study on Lebanese bilingual people in his book *Le bilinguisme arabe-français au Liban*,[7] the education of women was a luxury in the 1960s and 1970s. Many families often stopped the schooling of their girls after primary school, assuming that this level of education was sufficient for the life of a woman. This is no longer the case, for many women continue to earn college degrees, and the prejudices described by Selim Abou have diminished tremendously.

Even today, education conceals a cultural and societal reality that a young woman can question only with difficulty. Regardless of religious affiliation, a girl's every act is calculated and her questions are stifled from the age of five. During adolescence, as she becomes more conscious of her internal struggle between remaining traditional and embracing modernity, her revolt is often masked. By the time women reach adulthood, their marital and family situation largely determines their status in society. These observations are as true today as they were 20 years ago, at least in rural areas.

Women tended to conform to models of traditional behavior due to societal pressure during my youth and during my research in the early 1980s. In the aftermath of the Civil War, women who were pursuing other options outside the traditional model still felt the need to maintain a facade of conformity because of the lasting importance of their families' reputation and expectations. Despite huge transformations in Lebanese society, the standing of the family within the community remains essential, and women's behavior remains a reflection of the family's reputation.

Saghbine is a center of education and therefore a cultural center. Its manner and perspective on educating women used to be dominant in the region, but its influence is now declining due to the emergence of Shi'i schools administered by Hizbullah.

After the rise of the Shi'i population in the 1980s and the expansion of the *Jam'iyyat Islamiyya,* charitable Islamic associations, Hizbullah has become deeply involved in the provision of social welfare services, the creation of charitable, health, and educational services within the framework of a societal project. Hizbullah opened schools of *al Imdad*, *al Mustapha,* and *Mahdi* associations in Lebanon, and particularly in the Bekaa Valley, to impact the education in Lebanon and promote a model of education based on the culture of *itlizam*—religious engagement. This undertaking illustrates how Hizbullah, through its social organizations, functions as any other sectarian group in Lebanon looking after its own interests in forging a societal change through education and negotiating a new identity. As a result, two models of education are being juxtaposed, one model provided by private Christian

schools integrating Western values and promoting a unified model of identity and another provided by Islamic schools funded by Hizbullah adopting Islamic values. The two models of education are currently yielding two different models of identity, particularly in shaping a girl's identity as they enter the public sphere and in some cases embracing activism. Two parallel systems of education, one religious and the other secular, are at the root of the bifurcation of society. The modern secular system labeled as a product of European colonialism and a promoter of the Western-oriented process of modernization does not reflect a continuity with the Muslim past. These two trajectories of modernity in the academic and educational system are of great importance in shaping girls' identity in their upbringing, and aiming at changing Lebanon's identity as the ultimate goal.

CHAPTER 3

Marriages and the Condition of Married Women

Regional Overview

Dans toutes les sociétés paysannes, les choix matrimoniaux et la maîtrise de la terre sont les occasions privilégiées de développer des stratégies savantes et de longue haleine, puisque ce sont les deux occasions principales ou une incertitude est introduite dans le système des rapports sociaux . . . Une stratégie d'alliances matrimoniales et de maîtrise de la terre menée habillement et avec persévérance au cours de plusieurs générations assure a un lignage prééminence, pouvoir et éventuellement contrôle sur la collectivité, tandis que des mariages inconsidérés et une gestion inattentive du patrimoine entrainent inévitablement le dépérissement d'un lignage aussi bien pourvu qu'il soit à l'origine.[1]

In all country-dweller societies, the matrimonial choices and the control of the land are the privileged occasions to develop masterly and long-term strategies, because they constitute the two main circumstances of creating uncertainty in the social relations system . . . A strategy of matrimonial alliances and control of the land, conducted with ability and perseverance throughout generations, ensure preeminence to a lineage as well as power, and eventually control over the collectivity, whereas unconsidered marriages and a distracted management of the patrimony inevitably engender the wasting away of a lineage, as flushed with success the lineage could originally be.

The intersection of tradition and modernity is perhaps best exhibited in the institution of marriage. In a society where the role of women and family are central components in the debate over modernization, marriage encompasses both major factors and lends itself to playing an integral role in determining one's identity, so much so that our Christian village saw endogamy as commonplace to preserve a common identity among village dwellers. Furthermore, the customs surrounding marriage—the ceremony,

the material exchange, and even the negotiation between families—provided an opportunity for families to relate to one another as they came together to celebrate a common custom in their common way. The practice—as both a religious and social affair—reinforces group identities, and as it has changed over time, the way that groups relate to one another has also been forced to evolve.

While a milestone in any individual's life, marriage is particularly important for women—especially in the village. It marks a girl's graduation into womanhood, her break from her family and the beginning of a new, independent life. While marriage traditions have evolved, the significance of marriage in a woman's life remains of paramount importance, and today, still marks the beginning of an independent life, be it in the villages of the Bekaa or the high-rise buildings of Beirut. The role of women and family remain central components of the debate over modernization and progress. Marriage is not only a societal issue, but a women's issue, as it defines her status in her society and her entitlements under the law. Again, we see women at the crux of an issue that is at the heart of modernity.

The Marriage Tradition

Marriage in most primitive societies presented an economic value of vital importance.[2] In the traditional sense, marriage in itself was a form of exchange that encompassed material objects, social values, and even women, whose transfer from one group to another was a general custom. Rights, properties, goods, and people circulated among groups through a continual mechanism of giving and taking. Marriage had an all-inclusive character; it was at once sexual, economic, judicial, and social. This fundamental character of marriage reveals the dualistic nature of the affair, for in one marriage, two groups benefit. From an outsider's perspective, the exchange may seem egalitarian, although actually two groups of men arranged the exchange, while the women—though directly involved in the marriage—were considered as objects of exchange instead of partners.[3]

By contrast, groups that placed large importance on the privilege of rank and fortune saw marriage based on endogamy—marriage within the same group—as an expression of the preservation of patrimony, or keeping properties and goods within the family. In other words, marriage is a deliberate or unconscious measure to keep certain social or economic privileges inside the group.

However, the practice of endogamy was and is still limited because of the prohibition of incest. As Germaine Tillion mentions in her book, *Le harem et Les cousins*, the importance of the parental system in Lebanon comes from

the country's Mediterranean character. Parental links in Mediterranean countries are such that Tillion found the justification to call the region *république des cousins,* that is, republic of cousins, or *république des beaux-frères*, that is, republic of brothers-in-law. According to Tillion, men who live in this system consider it their duty of solidarity to have good relationships with members of their paternal lineage—this responsibility is more important than their other civil and patriotic obligations.[4]

The prohibition of incest, a common law derived from religious law, acted as a genetic protection, to prevent the negative biological effects of marriages from the same bloodline. However, the *noble riverains de la Méditerranée*[5]—or residents of the Mediterranean—still ignored the Christian religious law. In her research, Tillion encountered marriages between uncles and nieces among old Arab Christians of Lebanon, as well as Lebanese Muslims. "In Lebanon, I came across marriages between paternal first cousins. [In the 1960s], the clergy required for this type of marriage to have a special dispensation, although this dispensation was never refused."[6]

The ideal marriage kept all the girls of the family for the boys of the same family. "In the largest part of the Levant, the ideal marriage used to take place [until the 1960s] between a man and a relative that most closely resembled his sister without actually being his sister."[7] A man did not seek a woman physically resembling his sister, but rather a woman to fill the place of his sister as the lady responsible for the management of his house or other wifely duties. "This preference is part of the old Arab personality."[8] According to Tillion, women, like pieces of land, were part of the patrimony, causing the idea of endogamy to spread throughout the old Arab World.

While no longer a common trend, endogamy persists as a modality of marriage. Why has the practice of endogamy been maintained until the present day? Many causes seem to have contributed to this preservation. The first is a result of the refusal to divide the land that was intended for inheritance down family lines. Minority populations, such as the Christians of the Orient, were resolved to safeguard their threatened religious identity by procreating with other members of the same religious group. In addition, one must consider the vivacity of traditions that remained even among urbanites who continued to value the endogamic society. "In the South of the Mediterranean, the simple act of not accepting strangers creates nobility and talk of the ancestors is enough to instill a sense of pride."[9]

One can extend the definition of endogamy to include marriages within the same religious sect or the same village. While marriages between family members have become rare in Saghbine, a strong preference for finding a spouse within the village community persists, including unions between members of different Christian sects. In a village society that has lost many

members to exodus, the population is so reduced in number that the choice of potential spouses has also diminished, and it has become necessary to find a partner outside of the religious community or even the village. Nevertheless, the drive to preserve a common identity persists, and marriage between members of the same religious groups remains tantamount to a social obligation.

Types of Marriage

Mounir Chamoun presents different kinds of marriage of Lebanon[10] that condense into four main groups:

(a) Marriage of Pressure
The bride or groom's family exerts a coercive pressure to accept a conjugal union that neither individual desires. Although this modality has become rare in both the rural and urban milieux, in many villages, those who choose a prospective husband do not even consult the young bride-to-be. She is literally married against her will. She loses her dignity and any rebellion makes her appear to be ungrateful. Social pressure and models that force each of the partners to conform do not necessarily produce a marriage that is destined to fail. In rural areas, this type of marriage is more likely to succeed since the young girl will marry and live just as her mother did. By contrast, in urban areas, this type of marriage often ends in separation or annulment. In a conservative milieu, many forced marriages last because of the initiative of the women, regardless of the behavior of their husbands. In this society, suffering, patience, and resignation are considered as essential qualities for women. Even if the number of forced marriages declines, the Lebanese mentality of "We married the children," or that parents and adults are responsible for finding their children's spouses, remains.

(b) Arranged Marriages
This type of marriage occurs through indirect pressure and exists on the assumption that both interested parties are in direct agreement. In rural settings, families are responsible for the arrangement, and boys and girls are destined for each other through their respective parents. The arrangement can also be the work of friends, family, or even the village priest. In urban societies, marriages arranged by parents are based upon economic interests, where families—especially the wealthy—search for spouses from prominent, well-to-do families for their children. In reality, all these marriages are *mariages de raison,*

or marriages of reason, that seem to last in appearance, although they sometimes turn toward drama and even violence. Some of these unions grow to be harmonious, but others perpetuate suffering or hindering of enthusiasm and joie de vivre.

(c) Marriage by Khateefa

Marriage by Khateefa, or marriage by abduction, may be rare, but remains a practice in villages or by rural people who move to the city. Those who practice it are usually very young—in their early twenties. In most cases, this form of marriage is a less elegant way to conclude a long-awaited arrangement accepted by both parties to avoid the high cost of village weddings. Their families accept the match, but pretend to protest it under the mask of the indecency of abduction.

Yet the cases of real abductions are not necessarily fiction. In certain societies, even if the young girl does not consent to her "kidnapping," she finds herself obligated to accept the marriage with her abductor after having spent just one night outside her house, either because of her compromised honor or due to the effective and assumed loss of her virginity.

Though a common practice 60 years ago in villages, men practice abduction much less frequently today, and young girls have learned how to conduct themselves in such a situation. Of course, abduction with the previous consent of the girl and both families is a facade for an arranged marriage.

(d) Marriage by Free Choice

Marriage by choice of the bride and groom is the type of marriage that is emerging as a model amidst the disappearance of the more outdated forms of marriage outlined above. Young people in both urban and rural areas are increasingly claiming marriage with a person of their choice as an absolute right. University-educated young adults wish to marry the way they want and with whom they choose. As early as the 1960s and 1970s, marriage between students who had not finished their studies and consequently did not have a source of income became common in Beirut and other cities until the interruption of the Civil War. This shows a positive evolution in matrimony and is a sign for a continued positive trend in the future.

Forced marriages have disappeared; marriage by abduction has also disappeared except when practiced as a facade of morality by young couples to obtain parental approval. While arranged marriage still persists, young women find themselves in a difficult situation due to the demographic change as a result of years of war that led to the increasing number of unmarried

women, the law of supply and demand playing against a real free choice for women. The massive departure of men from the country limited their choice and somehow forced them to accept what is available regardless of the kind of modality of marriage.

Endogamy within each community has diminished; for example, in Saghbine; it remains at approximately 50 percent. Though rural exodus and emigration have allowed for a greater freedom of choice on matrimony, it is not rare for young expatriate men or women from Cleveland (where I currently reside), or in Akron, Ohio (the home for an expatriate community from Saghbine), to make the trip to the village to find a wife or a husband. Until now, my visits to the village are met with chides of "it is a loss for the village that you married an outsider, where were the young men of the village?"

Exogamy—union between two communities—which has increased from 35 percent in 1982 to 70 percent in 2009, is a sure indication of an evolution toward the free choice in the modalities of marriage. In general, male dominance is on the decline, but a moral constraint requires a woman to remain dependent on her husband, as he is without question the head of the nuclear family. We are witnessing a conflicting situation. First, the change attests that customs and traditions no longer hold much merit but, nonetheless, serve as structured gestures for public display. Second, traditions are lending a helping hand to women in their search for a suitable spouse, the conjectural situation playing against women.

While divorce is increasingly accepted instead of a life of renouncement, it is challenged by religious structural constraints, which indicates that the transformation of women's subjectivity remains a push and pull of tradition and modernity. More importantly, as highlighted in the case study of Magda and Alex, a long overdue needed civil marriage depends on a courageous and transparent dialogue between the different religious communities to adopt a civil marriage administered by the civil legislation of the state, guaranteeing equality and justice for all.

Wedding Traditions and Marriage in Saghbine

A marriage in a rural area provided one of many occasions to create excitement within the village. Allowing a digression into local history, we can observe an image of tradition that is fading rapidly. Contrary to the usual simplicity of life in the countryside, planning and preparing for weddings and other traditional ceremonies are complex, complete with feasts, visits, and presents. A dignified fiancé never comes to see his fiancée empty-handed. His future in-laws should reproach him, according to custom, for his "unjustified" openhandedness.

It is customary that mothers or homemakers, whose homes are located on the processional route, throw handfuls of rice or sugared almonds on the new couple; young girls even sprinkle eau de cologne or perfume. The community wishes the newlyweds well, including exclamations of hopes for happiness, long life, and many children.

Custom dictates that the mother-in-law welcome her newlywed daughter-in-law in the foyer of her house by offering her a pound of sour dough. The bride then applies the dough to the top of the lintel, draws two lines in the shape of a cross, and sticks a few coins in it. The harmony of the household depends on the traditional speculation that the prosperity of the new home is proportionate to how well the dough adheres to the stone. Guns are fired into the air and best wishes pour out from guests. In the entire Orient, Lebanon in particular, people are profoundly convinced of the effectiveness of well-wishes for others. Just by shaking hands to greet each other, two villagers make at least 15 to 25 mutual wishes for good health and prosperity, to name a few.

Well-wishes at a wedding are usually related to prosperity, harmony, and—most of all—fertility. Participants exaggerate according to his or her vision for the couple, wishing them five or six children or an enormous home. Older and young women alike participate in the common flurry of excitement.

While traditional customs for such occasions have been simplified over the years to include just the ceremony and reception, the importance of marriage as a cornerstone to a woman's—or man's life—has not diminished. In the old days, celebrations lasted a whole week and the entire village was invited. This historic lavishness entailed a considerable expense for the families who were still participating in the sixties. In the twenty-first century, the last vestiges of these traditions have fallen away in favor of more European-style weddings.

Here are a few examples of dialectal poetry, addressed by the women of the village to the newlyweds:

Ya 'ariss el-'irss yihlalak	Ya 'ariss congratulations on your wedding
Wa ghanna 'awiha el-badr kirmalak	The moon sang 'awiha specially for you
Wa ithanna bi 'arustak zahret el-ma'rouf	Be happy with your 'arouss the rose of goodness
Was el-saad youqaf abd 'a chamalak	May happiness take hold on your left side
'Awiha ya 'arouss ma' 'arissik chterki	'Awiha ya 'arouss with your 'ariss know to share
'Awiha la tqaddou el-hayat mu'araki	'Awiha do not spend your life quarreling

'Awiha betlub lik min Allah as-saade	'Awiha we ask God to provide you happiness
'Awiha watkoun jeztek jeze moubaraki	'Awiha may your marriage be blessed!
Farha w'ammait jiretna	A joy propagated in our neighborhood
Wou chefna es-saad bdiretna	And we felt happiness in our surrounding
Bahr el-roum wal-Atlantik	The immensity of "Roum" sea and the Atlantic
Ma bisa'ou farhetna	Are not enough to contain (hold) our joy[11]

In Saghbine, notions of exogamy and endogamy specifically defined the modes of matrimonial exchange. The long-practiced endogamy linked to feelings of belonging in a community than to belonging to a family. Each of the two groups, Melkites and Maronites, wanted to keep their young girls for the young men of their own communities. In this climate, though a few conflicts ensued, each group felt the need to unite and strengthen in the face of the opposing group.

After the departure of the Druzes, Saghbine no longer had a few dominant landowners. Therefore, the type of preferred marriage was frequently between cousins in order to maintain the ancestral patrimony. Until 1982, 5 percent of marriages were between cousins, but mostly for reasons of family affection and not for fortune. Today, the number has dropped to 2 percent, according to the Maronite priest who leads the church.

Exogamous marriages are unions between the two communities. Individuals who had an outsider as a spouse were rare. These marriages occurred with hopes of safeguarding the inimitability of the village, particularly in Saghbine, from a distinct perceived threat from surrounding Muslim villages. A clear "us" and "them" mentality prevailed, and marriage was a tool to assert one's unified identity in the face of the other.

The preferred marriage practice is endogamy; having a spouse from the same village, regardless of his or her religious affiliation, persists at 50 percent. This attitude is not reflexive, and there is, for instance, some hesitation if a Greek Orthodox person wants to marry a villager. Today, eight villagers are even married to Muslims, demonstrating the prevalence of village solidarity—even over religious affiliation. In such cases, the young bride and groom ultimately make the decision, which remains subject to their acquiescence in favor of the parents' orientations. Parents wish to keep their daughters in the village, and when a nonindigenous man presents himself as a suitor, their traditional mentality often dictates that they do not want him to marry their daughter.

How do these preferences for marriage play out in the present day? With an increasingly shrinking number of villagers, and the cultural and informational exchange championed by globalization, exogamy has made its way into even the most remote villages. In the face of different identities, how have villagers asserted themselves as a common people, sharing customs, traditions, and values?

The evolution of the economy from an autarchy to a "complementary" stage, accepting goods from outside the village, has led to external relations, provoking a parallel evolution of the endogamous matrimonial relations toward more exogamous ones. Exogamy of the village creates a possible metamorphosis, simultaneously a sign and a source of evolution, and Saghbine finds itself in a society on the path of transformation. Exogamous marriages seem to be increasing, particularly in milieu of high socioeconomic classes. In fact, exogamous marriages increased from 35 percent in 1982 to 70 percent at present, demonstrating how preferences of the past need to be adjusted to accommodate present-day realities.

Young men tend to marry outside the village, and their sisters are bringing more and more young men from outside the village as well. The socioeconomic level intervenes indirectly at the starting point of exogamous relationships by allowing the residential mobility of indigenous citizens; this mobility is the main reason behind many exogamous marriages. The young couples, far from being torn between the traditionally rigid matrimonial systems, have adapted easily to the new mode of urban life and to their recent need for expansion, stemming from the contact with and prominence of urban culture.

The evolution of the modalities of marriage in Saghbine represents a certain equilibrium. The forced marriage has not existed for 50 years. A form of moral constraint that rural girls do not often associate with young men remains, and therefore they could not make an authentic "choice" for themselves. The first suitor who came received a favorable welcome. For the most part, the indigenous parents are similar: they care more about the young man's work and honesty than about other qualities, and a suitor's education is a secondary priority.

Presently, though only for a minority, a type of "arranged" marriage still persists, but now "free choice" of the couple is imposing itself as the dominant trend, prevailing over the wishes of the parents. Parents have lost jurisdiction in this area and no longer feel responsible. They, however, are vocal about their instincts, and fear a bad reputation if their daughter participates in relations that they assess as "too liberal." As they see more younger women and men dating, parents are distressed, but they cannot do anything about it.

Marriages takes place, based on love, without any sort of interdiction. According to the old mores, in which parents would arrange marriages and impose spouses on their children, children have revolutionized recent marriages through choice. At the moment, children have become those who do the convincing, often by having recourse to a trustworthy third party; otherwise there is the possibility of a secret departure for one or two weeks preceding the wedding with the participation of the diocese's priest. After an unmarried young woman has spent one night away from her parent's home, her reputation, and by extension her family's reputation, is in danger, and after spending time with her chosen spouse in that manner, the parents often concede "defeat."

Marriages are becoming literally but discretely subjected to the eternal law of supply and demand, in addition to the boundaries placed on the young woman by the people in her life. Therefore, young couples—and women in particular—struggle to acquiesce to customs and traditions while adapting them to present circumstances. Often, these customs and traditions are relegated to maintaining outward appearances and serve as structured gestures for public display only.

The equilibrium and evolution of the matrimonial system are justified through a low rate of separation. Within the 500 families, the village counts 15 separated couples, a rate to 2 percent. This demonstrates the respect among the indigenous population for the institution of marriage, considered as the underlying structure of the society. However, Saghbine has seen a modification in the image of divorce; previously considered a deviance, or a social disorder, divorce is today considered a possible, but still unfortunate, outcome of marriage by many young men and women. However, this practice is only possible in rare cases fixed by the canon law; some young women, more free and having more connections outside the house, do not resign themselves, as in the past, to a failed marital life when a grave disagreement separates them from their husbands. Today, instead of a life of renouncement, they sometimes prefer a rupture and a construction of another, perhaps improved, home. The change of this attitude in women toward divorce exists as a result in the change in their conditions.

Let us end this horizon tour with celibacy. "En Orient, pour un homme sans femme, il n'y a pas de paradis au ciel et pas de paradis sur terre . . . Si la femme n'avait pas été créée, il n'y aurait ni soleil ni lune; il n'y aurait pas d'agriculture et pas de feu."[12] [In the Orient, for a man without a woman, there is no paradise in heaven nor on earth . . . If woman had not been created, then there would be neither sun nor moon; there would be neither agriculture nor fire.] While Oriental Jews and old Babylonians considered celibacy as a sin, in Saghbine, it remains an abnormal fate. Marriage is therefore the

only normalized fate, especially for women. However, the Lebanese respect religious vocations for women and men as well.

Changes in Marriage due to the Conjunction of Political and Economic Circumstances

For the current generation, young men and women are increasingly postponing marriage due to a range of political and economic factors. As of 1996, the average age of marriage for a Lebanese woman was 28 years old, whereas the average age was only 23 in 1970.[13] In *La génération désenchantée*, the authors describe how a context of economic and political uncertainty has created instability in the equilibrium between the private and professional spheres. A lack of professional opportunities, reflected in a high unemployment rate that is notably disadvantageous for young adults and twice as high for young women as for young men, has resulted in young people delaying the rite of passage that traditionally marked the entrance into adulthood: marriage, buying a home, and starting a family. Now, young people spend a longer period studying at the advanced level, have greater difficulty integrating into the workforce, and often do not have the means to buy their own home, which not only delays plans for marriage, but also increases the number of young people who emigrate in search of opportunities elsewhere.

According to the same study, the number of young Lebanese men and women who are earning their livelihood abroad, whether permanently or provisionally, is increasing, but the percentage of young men who emigrate (43.3 percent) is significantly higher than women (23 percent). Consequently, there is a deficiency of young men of marriageable age (30–50 years old), which is a major factor in the dramatic increase of unmarried women over the past several decades. The percentage of single women approximately doubled from 1970 to 1996 in most age ranges, with the exception of women under the age 25; for example, 25.1 percent of Lebanese women in the age range of 25–29 years were single in 1970, but this percentage increased to 46.6 percent as of 1996.

Another increasingly popular option for Lebanese women is to marry foreigners. A recent survey of marriages between people of different nationalities in Lebanon[14] reveals that international unions allow women to maintain the preference for finding a spouse within their religious confessions or with people of Lebanese origin living in the international Diaspora. Out of the 17,860 marriages of "mixed" nationality that were included in the survey between 1995 and 2008, 51.1 percent identified with the Sunni community, 33.6 percent with the Shi'i community, and 5.6 percent with the Greek-Orthodox community. It is interesting to note that the prevalence of

marriages between Lebanese women and men from Arab countries was much higher among Lebanese Muslim women (Sunni and Shi'i) than Lebanese Christian women, who married European and Americans in relatively higher numbers.[15] Lebanese women's clear tendencies to choose husbands living in other countries who, nonetheless, come from the same religious background, or in some cases even have origins from the same village, reflect a globalization of Lebanese endogamy—an adaption of tradition to modern times. One could argue that advances in technology facilitate the perpetuation of the tradition of endogamy.

It is important to note that economic and political instability are delaying marriage for the majority of Lebanese young people and transforming the understanding of endogamy, but these factors do not diminish the importance of marriage in this society—adjusting to modern realities but still maintaining a deeply rooted social value that characterizes the fabric of the village's tapestry. The perceived threat of a declining birth rate and an aging population has made marriage and childbirth a question of survival for young Lebanese who are concerned for the continued existence of their specific family and religious groups and for the future of the nation as a whole. Society still considers the matrimonial unit as the only legitimate outlet for romantic and sexual relations, and any relationship outside of wedlock is largely considered morally reproachable.

Religious and Civil Marriages

In Lebanon, as in the rest of the Middle East and in other countries of the Mashrek and the Maghreb, religious marriage is the only legitimate practiced institution. For Christian churches, marriage is a sacrament, a union between a man and a woman that becomes legal in its aim to benefit both people in their lives together, in the creation of a family and the raising of children—the only real way to give back to society. The Christian churches are very much interested in the institution of marriage, for they abolished polygamy and prohibited divorce on principle by invoking the following gospel text: "Because of this, man leaves his father and his mother and will attach himself to his wife; and the two will become one flesh . . . may man not separate what God has united."[16]

In a general sense, there is no authority great enough to dissolve a Christian marriage. However, much as these rules were put in place to validate marriage,[17] marriages could be annulled in the case of the husband's impotency, if either the bride or the groom is under the required age or are discovered to be related, and in other special cases. Yet marriages can take

place despite these special circumstances with the permission of the Church, which is the only institution authorized to give consent in this domain.

Catholic marriage, both Maronite and Melkite, is a sacrament based on an engagement of mutual consent. The sacrament cannot be dissolved even if following the marriage ceremony, the man or woman does not fulfill his or her marital obligations. In the case of serious disagreements, an ecclesiastic tribunal verifies the validity of the conditions of the engagement. They sometimes annul the marriage, but it is also in their power to determine who keeps the custody of children in the case of a simple separation (until the age of seven, children are under the custody of their mother) or determine the payments a spouse must make to support the other in the event of a separation.

The Orthodox treat marriage and divorce in a much more complicated way: the clauses of the contract are more detailed, flexible, and more numerous, giving the ecclesiastic tribunal much with which to work. For example, Catholics consider adultery a cause for separation that does not have to be permanent, whereas the Orthodox consider adultery grounds for divorce.

Many religious communities exist among the Lebanese people, and marriages between religious groups cause a certain number of religious and legal problems. Lebanese couples have inherited a legal framework based upon traditional marriage—where religious laws dictate social arrangements and make it increasingly difficult for groups with different religious identities to join forces—creating a new, multicultural, and religiously diverse family unit. Upon marriage, women enter into their husbands' religious communities. When a marriage occurs within the Catholic community, there are few problems, for the young girls must sign a document to adopt the rite of her groom. A Catholic-Orthodox marriage follows the same procedure, but if the two Churches do not have a working relationship with one another, it can become a problem from a religious angle. Furthermore, when the Orthodox community celebrates a marriage, it is no longer under the rules of the Catholic Church. In the event of the failure of the marriage, the husband (Orthodox) can obtain a divorce from his wife, sanctified by the Orthodox Church, although the Catholic woman is still considered married, as the Catholic Church does not easily grant divorces. To avoid this inconvenient situation, the Oriental Canon Law in 1949 ruled that, if one of the partners in a marriage is Catholic, a marriage conducted by an Orthodox priest renders the marriage void, claiming a *vice de forme*, or invalid marriage license.[18]

In the event of any marriage failing, divorce is always a problem. Granting a divorce lies within the power of the community, religious or civil, that performed the marriage. In Lebanon, there is an intimate link between

religious and civil domain, although all divorces pronounced by the religious authorities have the power to break up a marriage. The power of the Church is so great that, in the event of a failed marriage, in order to resolve the situation in both religious and civil realms, many Catholics convert to Orthodox rites to obtain the divorce. Many will then remarry in the Orthodox Church. Although conversion for the sole purpose of changing marital status is against Lebanese law, it is still practiced, and in the case of a Catholic to Orthodox conversion, the marriage under the Catholic Church is no longer recognized. Religious officials are second to only the Lebanese Constitution in terms of their power, though religious authorities dictate marriages and divorces that are recognized in the civil domain—another indication of their complex connection.

> N'est-ce pas la un problème théologico-pratique? La confrontation sereine de deux traditions, orientales et occidentales, la comparaison entre le cas du divorce admis par l'epikie des Orthodoxes et la jurisprudence des déclarations de nullité par les Catholiques, ne permettraient-elles pas de découvrir . . . la voie que le Saint Esprit suggère à l'Eglise pour maintenir fermement la doctrine de l'indissolubilité, tout en parant avec miséricorde aux défaillances humaines?[19]
>
> Is this not a problem of theology and practicality? The sincere confrontation of two traditions, Oriental and Occidental, the comparison between the case of divorces granted by Orthodox *epikies* and the jurisprudence of annulments granted by the Catholics—don't they lead to the discovery of . . . the way the Holy Spirit suggested to the Church to tightly cling to the doctrine of indivisibility, even in the light of human deficiencies?

The Greek Orthodox Saint Synode Church of the Antioch Patriarchy decided on November 12, 1960, to refuse to admit converts who wished to enter the Orthodox Church to ask for a marriage or a divorce. This decision risked a paradoxical result: if remarriage became impossible in Christian Churches, there was always the possibility of converting to Islam in order to "take another spouse." There is always the case of those who change their religion for the sake of marriage and in turn lose their faith: "They cannot ask for a grandiose mass for their new marriages, for a solemn ceremony cannot come out of a lie."[20]

How do Lebanese couples facing an inevitable divorce challenge the rules of their respective religious groups that fully control the marriage institution in Lebanon? How are they able to deal with the agonizing divorce time leaving women and men frustrated while the country is in the midst of transformation? How do they manage to live between traditional marriage laws and customs in a society with modern problems and issues?

Religious divorces are extravagantly costly given the income per capita in Lebanon, time-consuming—taking five to seven years—and can be degrading as the religious judge can have the couples exposing their dirty laundry. As part of the country's laws, the civil government automatically upholds the rulings of the religious courts on the issue of marriage, divorce, and child custody. For instance, a civil law enforcement can ban someone from traveling in order to enforce the religious court's ruling. Related governmental entities have the power to execute the sentence and in some cases imprison someone for failing to pay alimony or child support.

What complicates the matter is that in most cases the intentions of the judges have proven lacking in transparency and fairness. Religious judges have their own unofficial group of lawyers who are financially close to the judges and can finalize a divorce in a shorter period of time for an additional cost. This lack of transparency and corruption is forcing the divorcing couple to challenge the system in different ways; one of them is to convert to another Christian sect where the religious judges charge a flat fee less costly than divorcing in the Maronite, Melkite, and Orthodox Churches. For instance, the Assyrian Church offers a quick, legitimate, and affordable divorce. Moreover, the divorcing couple has the option to convert to Islam to benefit from a swift divorce process at a much lower cost.

So what does this mean for the future of a traditional institution facing modern times? How do young Lebanese men and women find space for their wants and needs caught between the stitches of a binding social fabric? In short, how do they attempt to come to terms in their mutual existence? Take the case of Magda and Alex:

Case Study of Magda and Alex[21]

During high school, a young man Alex and a young woman Magda from Ashrafieh fell in love and got married at the age of 22. They lived in the United States for eight years. Alex was still attending a graduate program in engineering, and then worked for an engineering firm in Houston, Texas. They happily went through campus life the first year, the second year things began regressing slowly, and by the third year Alex began entertaining the idea of divorce because Magda was overwhelmingly homesick and constantly complained about not being happy away from her family, particularly her mother. During this third year, her mother flew from Lebanon for a three-month visit and after that things started going downhill. The following five years were so unhappily lived that they both agreed that Magda would go to Lebanon for a year to be close to her family and then come back. The couple did not have children at this point.

After a year, she refused to come back to live in the United States. The husband's flourishing business in Houston did not allow him to join her immediately in Lebanon. Their relationship consisted of visiting each other every three months, whether in Beirut or Houston. Anyway, her actions proved later that her intentions were for Alex to stay in the States and send her money to be on her own and live her own way. In the meantime, her mother convinced her to have children at any cost; she then visited fertility gynecologists. Finally following continuous treatment, she conceived twins, a boy and a girl. At this point, after ten years of marriage, she was 32 years old.

Alex agreed on having children in the hope that his wife would come back to her senses after becoming a mother. Although her excessive grumbling and nagging forced Alex to ignore her, he was constantly entertaining the idea of a divorce, but did not act on it. After all, there had been no divorce in his family, and his conservative upbringing discouraged divorce due to the negative social and family repercussions. Obviously, Magda kept taking advantage of the situation. In Houston, Alex felt relieved and had the peace of mind a long time overdue.

Time proved that Magda's plans diverged totally from what Alex had hoped in forming a family, with solid Christian values. She desperately wanted children to fulfill her motherhood call, and more importantly to tie Alex up to the marriage because he mentioned several times the possibility of separating from her. Unconsciously, his first step toward divorce was the decision to let her go to Lebanon for a year. The idea pleased her and she went to Lebanon to relive her teenage life, going out and having extramarital affairs, and imitating her mother's selfish, inconsiderate, and unfamily-like way of life.

Soon after the children were born, Alex moved to Lebanon to be more involved in the children's lives. At this point, neither had feelings for the other. Magda had one live-in nanny to take care of the babies and one live-in housekeeper. Despite Alex's generosity, her behavior did not improve. On the contrary, it was strange, and the marriage worsened. She decided to sleep in a different room and spent a sizable amount of her time on the phone. She had male friends visiting her in the house claiming to be close friends of her family. For almost two years, life was strange because of her disrespectfulness and refusal to play the role of a wife or a mother. The housemaids took care of the children; Magda did not care about her husband's well-being and avoided any contact with his family and yet she wanted him to be close to her family. She was deeply influenced by her mother Nayla. Her mother had been able to maintain the image of conservatism and tradition in her own marriage,

despite her numerous relations with other men. She was mainly attracted to rich and politically powerful men.

Alex then hired two private detectives to build up a case based on evidence. One morning, they called him up and told him that his wife had a man in her office. He went to face her in order to catch her in the act and to stop her denial, lies, and pretense that she was the victim in this marital crisis. Her unfaithful behavior pushed Alex to the edge. He knew that divorce was the only way out, but that was the most difficult task in the Maronite Catholic Church.

In 2000, Alex began consulting lawyers and they told him that the process is expensive; the cost of a divorce ranged from $20,000 to $40,000 depending on the time required to finalize the divorce, from three to seven years. At that time, he had financial problems and could not afford this procedure. He had two options: either convert to Islam to get a quick divorce for little money or convert to another Christian sect, such as Assyrian, pay a flat fee ranging from $3,000 to $5,000, and get a quick divorce. Finally, Alex opted for the second solution for affordability and time saving, and, more importantly, because the children would remain Christian. Indeed, with the Assyrian Church, they obtained a divorce within less than a month.

This is one example of how young couples, in the midst of the obvious corruption in the system, challenge the system and find a way out. To avoid these religious and legal impasses, the concept of civil marriage has gained popularity in some circles since the end of the Civil War. A true product of modernity, civil marriage is still contested in its legitimacy, as it strays from a long-established custom and questions the formerly inextricable linkages between society and piety. Nevertheless, the stewards of a new modernity are driving it forward as their chance of survival in an increasingly economically and politically challenging time.

In an article discussing how the adoption of civil marriage could be the initial component of rethinking the role of religion in the Lebanese political system, Joseph Zoghbi quotes the renowned Lebanese lawyer Phares Zoghbi's book *A livres ouverts, une vie de souvenir*. Phares Zoghbi points out that, in addition to creating *communautés historiques confessionnelles*, Article 14 of the French mandate also included the establishment of *les communautés de droit commun.*[22] These "civil" communities would be organized and administered within the limits of civil legislation, and could potentially be used to grant civil marriages and create one national Lebanese community. One law would govern all Lebanese citizens. In other words, in conjunction with religious marriages, which used to have a more personal value since they were tied to church life and a more profound spiritual life, civil marriage permits

the generalization of matrimonial monogamy and confessional exogamy that Lebanon needs to homogenize its social institutions.[23]

Caught between traditional modes of proclaiming identity through association and adapting marriage to modern circumstances, Lebanese couples are faced with a delicate balancing act in establishing their identities. This situation, furthermore, disproportionately affects women, whose own identities and status in society are determined by their marital status. Their response? Moving away from a religious space to inhabit a secular one, and taking pieces of a cultural and religious background and marrying them with modern practices. Couples that want to be modern maneuver within their structural limitations. Sometimes, the result is empty social customs kept up as a means for appearance; other times, it may result in the complete abandonment of one's religious and traditional identity, as in the case of Magda and Alex. They play within tradition and modernity as much as they can to bring about change.

In the United States, two types of union are recognized as "marriage," one is civil union and the other is a marriage performed by a religious authority.



Figure 3.1 Wedding: In 1952, Georgette Gemayel is walking to enter *Mar 'Abda* Church in Bikfaya; Michel Gemayel, her sister Mimi, her mother Ramza, and her mother-in-law to be Salma accompany her. The colossal gathering surrounding the Church on her wedding day indicates the popularity she attained in her village from her volunteer work and generosity.

A similar conflict is brewing in that marriage, in the religious sense, is more highly valued by the government than a civil union, carrying benefits such as better access to joint health care, visitation during times of illness, "married" tax status, and being able to use the word "spouse." These couples face many of the same barriers as Lebanese people are facing, but in a different corner of the same struggle. They are similarly caught between tradition and the modern.

In some instances, the separation of religious and civil is more easily conducted in a Christian milieu. Is it acceptable for a Muslim?

CHAPTER 4

Adulthood, Married Life, and Women's Work Outside the House

Marriage is the destiny that society traditionally proposes to a woman. Even today, most women are married, were married, are preparing to be married, or suffer from not being married. It is in relation to marriage that one defines the single woman. Therefore, it is through the condition of a married woman that I will pursue this study of women in rural Lebanon.

Masculine guardianship is on its way to extinction. However, the epoch in which we live is still, from a feminist standpoint, a period of transition. The modern marriage can only be understood through the lens of the past that it perpetuates. For young girls, marriage is a significant means of integration into the community, which is why mothers have always sought out suitors for their daughters. In the first part of the last century, mothers barely consulted their daughters. The eventual suitors could only catch a glimpse of them through arranged meetings. Therefore, the young woman appeared to be absolutely passive; the Arabic expressions regarding marriage reflect that practice: "the woman was married" becomes "was given by her parents to marriage," and just as the phrase "the young man got married," is expressed in the vernacular as "he took a wife."

Even today, the husband remains the chief of the community, and thus he embodies her in the eyes of society. She takes his name; she is associated with his church, integrated into his social class, and into his environment; she belongs to his family, she becomes his "other half." The religious code, whichever it is, asks her to obey her husband. He is the one who presents opportunities for a joint future in society for the pair of them.

Today, marriage, for the most part, continues to follow this traditional model. Primarily, marriage imposes itself with urgency on the young women more than on the young men. There are no other alternatives proposed to

young women of low social standing. In low-income communities, a single woman remains dependent on her father, her brothers, her brothers-in-law, and the exodus to the city is not always possible for her. In certain urbanized communities, young women find themselves in a domain in which they are unable to earn a living for themselves; in most cases, they stay in their paternal home, or in the home of a brother or sister. Even in cases where a young woman is emancipated by her family, the economic privilege held by males encourages her to prefer marriage to a profession: she searches for a husband whose position is superior to hers, hoping that he will succeed faster and go further than she can. Traditional mores still make the sexual emancipation of single young women difficult. An unmarried woman is still considered a socially incomplete being, even if she earns a living—a wedding ring on her finger is needed to win over the integral dignity of another human being and to exercise the fulfillments of her rights. For all these reasons, many of the adolescents that I asked about their future prospects answered as they would have answered in the old days: "I want to get married."

Marriage requires heavy sacrifices; in particular, it implies a rupture with the past. Many adolescent women suffer anguish at the idea of leaving their father's home. When the event approaches, anxiety intensifies, especially surrounding the few remaining arranged marriages. The wedding ceremony exposes its universal and abstract significance: a man and a woman are united according to symbolic rituals with their guests as their witnesses. Alone, they are two concrete and singular individuals who are facing each other and they can no longer hide their affection from the world. Indeed, the principle of marriage is delicate, because it officially transforms an exchange that was originally founded on a spontaneous impulse into one that is destined to become deep and full of long-lasting affection, but also complete with rights and responsibilities to one another and the community.

For a married woman, the home becomes the center of the world. In it, she will find the ways in which she can express her personality. She will furnish the home according to an aesthetic that reflects her singular image for her home while demonstrating her social standard of life. Her home is the expression of her social worth and her truest self. A woman who does not work outside commits her care to her home, which gives her immense pride; this sentiment is not immune to the woman who also works outside the house, as she also derives responsibility and satisfaction from keeping a warm home that reflects her character and that of her family. Sometimes, the housewife wears herself out in the routine. She perpetuates in the present, every day imitates the day before, and the only hope for the future resides in her children. In the past, and to a certain extent, in the present, preparing meals is often a more joyful task than others, for it permits her to go to the market, which is a special

time of day for many women. Despite a myriad of daily chores to occupy her mind, a woman often finds herself lonely at home when her husband is at work and her children away.

Thus, the housework done by women does not grant her any autonomy; on the contrary, it builds dependency on her husband and her children. It is through them that her existence is justified and validated. Even for the working woman, having a stable and happy family and home life is still paramount to her personal and social identity. Loving and generally devoted, she executes her chores with joy. Approaching these chores begrudgingly would only make her tasks seem more insipid. A life full of resentment would restrict her to an inessential role, devoid of emotion like a housework machine.

Entering the family of her husband, women sometimes renounce the heritage of their paternal families. The institution of equal partition that has been in effect since 1959 has not yet entirely removed the custom of favoring sons to the detriment of girls. Boys continue to keep the family lands and girls stand down timidly in favor of their brothers' success. Their families provide for the girls until their marriages, and in many villages, families still bestow a trousseau upon their brides in an attempt to elicit admiration from the village and expose to the future in-laws their own wealth and standing.

Traditions occupied a large space, in particular, concerning girls' heritage. Without a doubt, notaries[1] have perpetuated, until now, the execution of wills that permit the preservation of sons' traditional birthrights, with less compensation going to daughters. However, one cannot neglect the rapid evolution in this area in which young women have become significantly aware of their rights and have begun to claim their share of the estate according to the legislation. In some cases, the family spirit is so strong that oftentimes girls resign themselves to sacrificing their rights. The woman's situation appears to stem from an "archaic" tradition, a tradition thwarted by three Mediterranean influences: Roman law, the Napoleonic code, and traditional Catholicism. In Islam, "eternity in the fire" is promised without any way out to the men who deprive their wives from their inheritance.

In Lebanon Christian daughters are meant to inherit from their parents just as their brothers do, according to the civil law enacted in 1959. However, legal violations against the right to girl's inheritance until recently were pervasive. In fact, one could write entire books on the subject. In many provinces, officials, customs, and society at large permitted for properties, homes, and lands to go to sons, particularly the oldest son. Furthermore, some town administrators appraised land at a quarter of its value, which kept the land at a low profile and deterred any other potential inheritors from contesting its passing to the sons. Like judges and notaries, land surveyors considered this tacit clause to be of utmost importance. While not engrained in civil

law, the discrimination against women in inheritance has been inscribed and implemented through custom.

The current transformation in inheritance practice where women have increasingly more rights indicates a trajectory of modernity initiated by women acting as agents of change. For example, some sisters are suing their brothers for taking more his share in lands, real estate, money, or other assets. This conceptualization of modernity is in line with the necessities of modern times—women too have expenses and are more and more joining the ranks of men in land ownership as opposed to the outdated tradition of inheritance based on a different balance of rights and responsibilities. Statistics published by the National Council for Lebanese Women's Issues (NCLW) substantiate this transformation. A sample of 433 women encompassing all age groups and levels of education, working in different fields—from agriculture to medicine—is reflected in the statistics. The survey covered different geographical areas; 44 percent of the women surveyed reside in Beirut, and the remaining 56 percent come from the five Mouhafazaat, including the Bekaa Valley. The survey indicates that on average, 19 percent of working women own an apartment or home, 9 percent own real estate or land, 4 percent own a company, 2 percent own stock market shares, 40 percent own a car, and 45 percent own a bank account.[2] These new figures not only indicate an increase of female landowners—but also have implications for the woman's perceptions of her rights and independence. They indicate a change in a woman's expectations of her rights to inherit—to have her own home and her own financial assets. These statistics are coupled with related behavior changes, and are more suitable to the modern times. As more and more women turn to the workforce, their financial independence is reflected in an accrual of assets, and their example paves the way for other women.

Women's Work: From Unappreciated Homemakers to Valuable Contributors

Two different cultural systems, one for men and one for women, have prevailed until the last two decades, but are now in transformation. The two systems were clearly in conflict, a silent conflict that for men measured value and prestige with money, skills, and measurable quantities and for women championed more intangible indicators of quality of life. This made it more difficult to measure the quality of life of women. While men earned salaries, rose in ranks in the workplace, and compared themselves to other men by tangible measures, women's work went unnoticed and unappreciated. In recent years, women are changing this state of being and doing; they are debating with men, leaving their homes, listening to one another, talking and working

together in order to harmonize their cultural models and to gather behind their common goals in order to save a world that will belong to their children.

Indeed, the first generation of feminists shed light on the prejudice of laws and legislations. Worldwide, feminist activists' top priorities included improving legislation, eliminating distortion that undermines the principle of equality of women and men. Thus, feminists called upon their respective governments to amend laws in order to align them with international human rights standards and particularly protocols of political, civil, economical, social, and cultural rights based on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1997 by the United Nation General Assembly. CEDAW, composed of a preamble and 30 articles, defined what constitutes discrimination against women and set forth an agenda for national action to end such state of discrimination. The second generation of feminists focused on eradicating illiteracy, thus advocating for girls' schooling at a young age, creating opportunities for higher education or technical training in order to arm them with the necessary tools to face life. The third generation of feminists focused on encouraging women to enter the workplace for an economic benefit: to earn a salary, participate in the production of the country, and, by the same token, ensure their financial independence, which in turn liberates them as they become self-sufficient and participate in sharing the household expenses with men. In this way, the focus was on encouraging women to specialize in the scientific field, which in Lebanon provides more opportunities for work and higher salaries. Women, in general, and, in Lebanon in particular, proved to be outstanding in fields such as medicine, engineering, technology, higher education, scientific research, and laboratory work. Studies also indicated that educated women have higher pedagogical skills, which is reflected on the academic capabilities of their children, as well as in their psychological and social development. At present, the fourth generation of feminists is adopting a comprehensive approach based on comparisons with other countries; however, in this pursuit, they simultaneously acknowledge that generalizations are dangerous, and sometimes fruitless because each country has its own history, and even in one country there are differences between geographical areas, social classes, public services, needs, expectations, perceptions, and identities.[3]

For traditionalists in Saghbine and elsewhere, the real role of women used to be essentially at home. Women were and still are respected, considered highly as mothers or sisters, as the center of the home. Within these limits, the traditional woman who is conscious of herself knows how to perfectly create a dynamic interior world and a social life that corresponds to her aspirations. Her contribution to work outside the home depends largely on her husband's

maturity and progressiveness. Until recently, the husband considered his wife solely attending to the home as an honor, a symbol of status. However, now young men hope that their wives are able to find work because the "old formula" of the woman at home no longer corresponds to today's reality—the necessity of a dual-income household.

Ten percent of young married women originally from Saghbine were working in the village and in Beirut as of 1982. In two decades, this statistic has risen to above 42 percent for women working in Beirut. However, in rural villages, the number has not changed as drastically, with only 11 percent of women in the Bekaa Valley (in which Saghbine is located) going to work—all age segments included—as indicated in the NCLW report. This moderate increase in Saghbine yet drastic increase in the capital city is indeed attributed to urban flight, as both men and women in search of work first go to Beirut. Working the land no longer interests either women or their male counterparts, and few devote themselves entirely to that kind of work. Young women in Saghbine prefer to work in canning factories. A hospital in the neighboring village of Khurbe offers a spectrum of sought-after employment opportunities at all levels, as do schools, and therefore, the women of this region can stay within a domain of traditionally female careers. Today, around 30 women who live in Saghbine year-round work in the various social service offices of the local government.

Traditionally, women help their husbands in their shops and businesses. In Beirut, many couples own their own businesses and hire salespeople outside of their families. Generally, the urban setting offers a more diverse applicant pool, especially in offices, and some women can advance to high positions in administration or education, but often their promotion opportunities are limited in the private sector, especially in banks, because men are still favored for directorial positions. Until 1982, no woman from Saghbine was in private practice as a doctor or a lawyer, for instance, but many women still prepared seriously for the possibility of equality in the future. At present, particularly in Beirut, the magnitude of employment and the development of new economic private sectors have shifted the options for women to embark on a nontraditional female career. A new category of women artist of about 1 percent has emerged in Lebanon—because of its liberal general ambience. Women are moving increasingly toward the private sector, which absorbs about 39 percent of women workers; only 3 percent are in the public administrative posts, 18 percent in the educational sector, and 15 percent as business owners. This significant shift occurred after 1990—or the end of civil war—when universities added new majors to the curriculum and new opportunities opened in the private sector due to globalization.

A woman's salary seriously contributes to improving family life, but the dominant mentality continues to sanctify the importance of the household

and the notion that a homemaker is better able to care for her children and home than those who work. In the face of this dilemma to reconcile family obligations and their capacity and need to participate in the workforce, how do these women perceive their identity?

In 1981, I conducted a cross-sectional survey with women workers from different socioeconomic levels. For them, work was a secondary priority next to their primordial role in the home. Even those who worked outside the home relied on the informal sector and jobs traditionally reserved for women, such as teaching and nursing, to glean extra income. These women went to work cognizant of how their work impacted their relationship with their husband, and their perceived relationship in the public sphere. At the time, most women did not use their careers as a means to match their husbands in breadwinning and income; they still looked inside the home for identity and fulfillment.

For the majority of women back then, work outside the house was not a necessity, thus confirming the fact that work was not always a required circumstance to transcend the "feminine condition." For them, the work outside the house did not constitute an obligation; it was a means to help their husbands support their families. Work outside the house did not acquire social status. However, the possibility for a single woman to integrate into the collectivity through her profession, since marriage has not yet integrated her into society, has begun to emerge.

Today, the necessity for women to participate in the workplace is unavoidable. From a practical standpoint, the needs of families are too great, and individual incomes are too low to subsist without a dual income. With this increased need comes a shift in the types of jobs women seek, and they are increasingly choosing higher-income jobs outside the realm of traditionally feminine careers. Women are aware that they can have the same careers as men have, which is evident from the increased prevalence of women doctors, lawyers, and engineers. They are aware that they participate in the "march"—or advancement of their society—and their contributions in the public and private sphere are equally valuable. Whereas in the past, women would not have chosen to work if given the option, today it is no longer a second priority. In the most recent report by the NCLW on the status of women, submitted to the UN in accordance with CEDAW, there are equal numbers of men and women currently seeking employment, with both at 39 percent. The report also noted that more unmarried women are seeking work than married women, as unmarried women see work as a means to escape their paternal home. This change in attitude indicates a change in women's self-perception, and the perception of their role in the world.

Women are increasingly experiencing discrimination against them in the conditions of employment. According to the NCLW report, 25 percent of

newly graduated women complained that employers give preference to young men at the entry level given the uncertainty of a young woman's continuity in employment should she marry. Labor laws give benefits to women only if the husband does not receive such benefits, and employers are reluctant to hire single women because they have to give them more benefits. Women also complained about the inequity of salaries between men and women for the same type of work. Women are negotiating higher salaries as to fulfill their responsibilities toward their family and to go up in the social ladder. Today, an average of 92 percent of working women contribute to the household financial responsibilities.

This emancipation through work and this perception of work as a tangible liberty are in accordance with the lifestyles of the surveyed women and their opinions and behaviors. The disconnect between measurements and indicators in quality of life—segregated by gender—has now resolved itself with women's monetary and other contributions to the household. For surveyed women, work is increasingly a fundamental measure of participation in the world, of self-accomplishment, and of fulfillment. Work enhances self-confidence, liberation, and the realization of equality with men. However, the most encouraging aspect in this positive self-perception of women is when women accept these new challenges with the encouragement of the social milieu, and mainly fathers and husbands.

This monumental change could not occur with one factor as the only driving force, but rather, by recognizing that multiple factors demonstrate their influences and modify the behaviors and models within a society and, in particular, the status of women. The social milieu is increasingly favoring and encouraging women's work outside the home, enabling them to use their skills, knowledge, and higher education.

Is It Better or Worse for Women in a Society in Transition?

For women living in the city, a more advanced lifestyle poses other problems. As society recognizes women's dignity, accepts their new social role, and understands their quest for personal equilibrium, women are presently facing real choices and are capable of exercising their rights to make those choices. More mothers in particular want to pursue this activity. What once appeared as a luxury has become commonplace for a great number of young women. A single income has quickly become insufficient for most couples. Naturally, the need to increase resources has changed the dynamics of the house. This new dynamic has provoked a strong presence of women in the workplace. Such an influx exists because of the magnitude of young workers

in the Lebanese population. Today's young women are well-organized and sometimes exhaust themselves, but they maintain their professional responsibilities alongside their maternal ones. This increase in productivity has led to an evident depreciation of the quality of housework, human relations, and family life but, more importantly, the time spent together. Family ties are waning.

Overall, by escaping what was once considered their vocation, women are no longer strangers to the loss of familial harmony, which traditionally consisted of the gendered division of roles. Yet a family assured of having two salaries feels more secure when facing the future. Often, the choice of whether or not to work is not a decision, but often a conformance with a certain lifestyle. Some need to work; others choose to work. For a large number of women, working has become the means of developing their competencies and their talents. Women have changed, and no one can contest their right to evolution and progress without being accused of refusing them access to education and training, without implementing brutal and unjust measures. Montesquieu noted in 1748 in *l'Esprit des Lois*: "Leurs forces seraient égales si leur éducation l'était" or "their forces would be equal if their education were equal." Therefore, it is illogical to reproach women for wanting to work after providing education to them.

Whether living in a village or in the capital, women are diverse: they are not the same age, they do not have the same aspirations, nor do they have the same needs. Some are comfortable with women's traditional conditions, and others, a larger number, are waiting for a real reform of their outlook. Our marvelous grandmothers and mothers were women always on the job, constantly helping others, and by existing only for their husbands and children, their lives became absorbed by these duties and they did not feel as if they had their "own" lives. Every one of their gestures became an illustration of their existence for others. They did not seek occasional pauses or even look for personal satisfaction because their vocation was to please others, to be available for others.

At present, many men admit that theoretically, for all intents and purposes, a woman is in need of a professional life as well as a family life. That is the goal of most young women. But the reality is sometimes difficult: there are not enough nurseries for babies under three years, and kindergartens, all private, are sometimes relatively expensive compared to the mother's salary, and it is in her best interest to stay home. Christian families see a decrease in their birthrate as a risk, due to the rising demographic Muslim presence, but it can be difficult for women to balance career aspirations and large families. Recently, middle-class and wealthy families are increasingly employing inexpensive foreign laborers in their homes to maintain the household and care

for children, and it remains to be seen how this development will affect the role of women in the household and the education of children.

In light of the diversity of concrete cases, there is no dominant model that fits everyone, no form of cultural or social imperialism that would be acceptable in Lebanon's multicultural context. Life is a succession of opportunities, and one should seize them to actualize and complete projects about which one feels strongly. Life is the unexpected, the movement, a certain possibility of making things as beings evolve. It is above all a way to envision the world and to adapt to it, contingent on one's aspirations or needs. There is no criterion, no hierarchy of happiness—nor are there exclusive owners of happiness in life, no more for men than for women. The only important fact is that life corresponds to one's expectations.

Many Carmelites found their happiness in contemplation and renouncement—elements of the religious life they have adopted. I had the privilege to attend the ordination of Sister Andrée, the daughter of my mother's best friend. In Lebanon, the Carmelite Monastery is located in Harissa, a picturesque point towering at about 650 meters above the Mediterranean Sea and overlooking Bay Jounieh; its height and access to panoramic views of the land and sea make it a gateway to the heavens. This small congregation of sisters consists of 25 nuns and about 4 novices. For women, there is no one superior model of fulfillment; each woman finds her own path according to her own being, her character, her aptitudes, and her vocation. Women know very well that they have to pay prices for their choices. Being in command of their lives is a sign of leading a more responsible life.

Already one can see the transformation: in the past, a nonsalaried woman was more dignified than a woman who goes out of her house and compromises the reputation of her family. Between the diverse chores that they perform, they search for equilibrium. Sometimes the latter is difficult to carry on, but this search points to their creativity and vision. Several important factors are preventing Lebanese women from attaining this equilibrium between their professional and family lives. Wage discrimination and a lack of possibilities for career advancement are discouraging factors for professional women, though they are amongst the most well-educated in the Arab world and represent 51 percent of the Lebanese university student population. Only 2 percent of professional women hold management positions, and only 1.5 percent are heads of private enterprises. This lack of opportunity is also present in the public sector: only 6.1 percent of government employees are women—20 percent of this group fall in the lowest-pay grade, while only 1.6 percent of women are in the highest echelon.[4] Legislation outlining a limited period of maternity leave may also be a factor that discourages women from working, especially in the private sector, where the leave period is only

40 days. A consequence of these obstacles is that Lebanon has a lower percentage of working women than the average in Arab countries: only 22 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 64 work (not including women who work in informal sectors), and this percentage drops progressively after the age of 30 as women's domestic responsibilities increase.[5]

Old Age and Widowhood

The solidity of family links in Saghbine allows for the envisioning of one's later years with a certain serenity. As with elderly men, elderly women receive a great deal of consideration and respect. Rural women continue to perform housework and take care of their vegetables and fruit trees, and their flowers. In the village, they serve as consultants on continuing customs. They contribute to the maintenance of traditional mores, or at least, through their moral authority, impede a rapid evolution toward an occidental lifestyle. Even those who are widowed or without children remain surrounded by the extended family and they experience much less isolation than their counterparts in other societies.

Elderly women find the reason to have faith in religion. Though they assess their lives as unfulfilled, they see this perceived failure as evidence sent by God, which allows them to receive a singular visit by His grace. Moreover, they find themselves again through the presence of their grandchildren. The grandmother who identifies with her daughter often welcomes her grandchildren with more avidity than the young woman herself. A young mother is often disconcerted and anxious because of a child's arrival, whereas the grandmother embraces him or her, and more importantly is able to move back 20 years in time vicariously. Therefore, all joys of possession and domination that she felt in the past through her children are able to emerge again. The grandmother holds a warm affection toward her grandchildren; she can play the privileged role of tenured divinity in their lives, and being free from rights and responsibilities of discipline, her love for them is a love of pure generosity. She no longer embodies the abstract justice, or the law of enforcement—a divide that can result in conflicts between the grandmother and the new parents.

In the city, old women remain surrounded by the family as well. The village traditions are mildly perpetuated in the capital. Often, children argue to have their mothers live with them as long as possible, and the mothers sometimes agree because they want to devote their lives as much as possible to their children and to the maintenance of their homes. Other elderly women, less preoccupied by the family—though rare—are enveloped by the social life. They go out, visit friends, and attend weddings and funerals; the presence of others fulfills their lives. Some even dedicate themselves to dispensing advice and criticism to those around them, perhaps as a way to compensate for their

inaction. They insert their "wisdom" in the lives of those who do not seek it, particularly their daughters-in-law.

Fortunately, Saghbine's women have not, as of yet, fallen victim to the lamentable tragedy of occidental women who feel lonely. There is not yet a need in Lebanon for organizations that create living environments and social activities specifically for the elderly, like assisted living facilities and nursing homes that are becoming prevalent in America and even in Europe. For the Lebanese women who have traveled and become more open to the exterior world, they continue to live "cultured" lives in old age that are sufficiently occupied with social and charitable activities.

It often appears that men are much more devastated by a late widowhood than women in Lebanon. They receive more advantages from a spouse than women do, in particular throughout their later years. By this point, the man's world has been reduced to the confines of the house, the passage of time no longer holds the same meaning, and it is his wife who maintains his daily rhythm. Having outgrown his public functions, men feel unproductive; but because women still manage the household, they remain necessary to their husbands, whereas often a husband is only troublesome to an aging wife. Women take pride in that independence—they finally begin to look at the world with their own eyes and therefore keep their mind bright and sharp. Some widows find a new life at this stage, thanks to their children who have succeeded or to the fortune of their sons-in-law. Satisfied, they accept going out with their children instead of staying at home each day more easily. They discover a new youthful frame of mind.

Thus, passivity commonly accepted as an "essential" characteristic of women proves to be an outmoded assumption. Certain conventional texts continue to dictate a world in which a clear divide exists between the masculine sphere of activity and the feminine world of passivity and domesticity. This sentiment is outdated and also fails to take the shifts in gender roles and perspectives throughout the various phases of life into account. Indeed, submission, resentment, and inheritance inequality are on the decline; women are increasingly aware of their rights as they embrace a modern state of being to bring about change. Women are creatively developing their own strategies as they maneuver their limitations to surmount day-to-day problems. Increasingly, these strategies are yielding profound changes whose benefits are reaped by the entire society.

Interview—Individual Perspectives: Christian Discourse

Roula: Liberation and Singlehood as Much-Needed Western Values

Roula is 46 years old; she grew up and attended high school in Saghbine. She now works for a newly founded telecommunication company. She is unmarried, and lives with her parents in their home in Saghbine.

What do you think of Muslim girls attending Catholic Schools?
When Muslim girls attend our schools, and Muslims, in general, associate with us, they just take what is beneficial for them. They associate with us to elevate their cultural status and to improve their language skills. They only take what is not in contradiction with their religion, tradition, and heritage. Those who belong to a higher class constitute a minority, and do not focus as much on religion.

How would you interpret open-mindedness?
I believe that during this time of political crisis, there is not any. In our Christian environment, the openness is outwardly restricted to external appearance and clothing, and does not reach the essential aspect of personal freedom in the way that it exists in the West. True freedom allows people to evolve, but here in this small community, people mind each other's business and personal matters. The majority of Lebanese did not change in a fundamental way. An outward imitation of the West does not lead us very far. Our societies still have a long way to catch up with Western societies. Here, they still lack the patriotic sense demonstrated by Western countries.

How do you envision the role of Arab Christianity?
Christians are open to others and have more patriotism. In general, Muslims focus more on religion, and as long as religious fanaticism and

emotional biases exist, there will be no real evolution. Visions of Lebanese people for their country are very different from those of other countries. Each community has to admit the existence of the other, who also fully belongs to the country; each speech ought to focus on all communities that form the nation. Necessity calls all citizens to reach this level of awareness.

Could you elaborate on the Islamic Revolution and Globalization?
Muslims learned and adopted Western technologies; they organized themselves and built information satellites. The adoption of their own media spread quickly through the Iranian Revolution in Lebanon, but we are not in Iran and everyone understands that no community could eliminate another. This is the pluralistic reality of Lebanon.

Why did the resurgence of the veil occur at this moment in time?
This is their way of safeguarding their religion and traditions. This resurgence is happening at this moment as a reaction to secularization, advocated by most Christians and more importantly, toward the globalization phenomenon. Islamists have reinterpreted religious texts to their own advantage and are making use of religious dress to concretize their rejection of Western values and differentiate themselves from Christians who have a long history of alliance with the West. Christian women played the most important role through education and involvement in public life in the evolution of the country. We are no longer the only player; women from different paths have formed local movements, although because of the financial assistance and connivance of foreign countries, women from other confessions evolved to make their voices heard as well. Global and regional events had a humongous effect on the pluralistic Lebanese fabric. The veil symbolizes their difference and their way to enter the public sphere; this phenomenon could also be called sectarianism.

How would you define women's rights in Saghbine?
The structure of the collectivity and size of the village puts women of my age bracket in a situation of constant defensiveness. If a woman acts powerfully, they consider her too strong. They say, "She acts like a man." If she acts softly, they consider her weak and incapable of holding a position in the workplace. Here, the trend in conduct requires a careful weighing of options in relation to the collectivity. The male constituent remains critical. In case she is strong, it insinuates that her man is weak. Thus, she is obligated to pretend to be obedient; otherwise, she can never thrive in this closed society.

Men still consider this feminist vision as adverse and undesirable. Women continue to struggle to genuinely enter the political sphere. Although women possess this sixth sense, or intuition in their intelligence, men keep asserting, "I am the man." Usually, women keep quiet, even if they disagree with their husband's way of thinking, especially in public. Society will categorize her as insane and indecent for interrupting, instead of recognizing the validity of her contribution.

What do you think about education?
Although some families remained conservative, the young generation is currently taking pleasure in having more freedom. Do not forget that 85 percent of them are attending universities in Beirut. Circumstances are not as they used to be, and parents give, although to a limited extent, children the freedom necessary in these modern times.

Parents still instill in their children, and particularly in girls, the idea that marriage is a top priority. Given the changing demographic figures and the realities of emigration, many young women remain unmarried and members of society make them feel that they are lacking something in their lives. In my case, I am financially independent and I have already bought an apartment in Beirut. Yet, I cannot make my own decision to live alone in Beirut; I cannot leave my father alone. Young women who live alone constitute a small minority, and generally, circumstances dictate their situation only when both parents die. This is how we grew up with emotional torment and guilt, and this is too much to bear.

A divorced woman who has to live without a male presence is not left alone. Society bothers her in many ways. I believe that in this regard, the West is much more rational. They allow women to live their lives without unnecessary constraints. Ironically, this contradictory situation is linked to the local type of thinking that makes Lebanese women go through very difficult times when parents pass away.

What are your thoughts about marriage and celibacy?
Due to the demographic shift, the percentage of celibacy has increased. Most young men emigrate and those who remain in the country cannot afford to start a home, but at least the age constraint does not apply to them. Traditional constructed rules make it difficult for a man to marry a woman who is older than he is, regardless of his love and attraction toward her. Our society is frustrating through its destruction of hopes. Albeit my accomplishment in such a small agglomeration and my financial independence, people look at me through one negative angle, being unmarried. Our women's liberation has a long way to go compared to the West. Our traditions impede our

humane evolution; overcoming these barriers is an urgent need. Prejudices and assumptions lacking humanity are all over the place regarding unmarried women; I feel it in my daily life while interacting with others. Critics and gossip emerges when romantic relationships begin or end. A woman who experiences this type of relationship will feel guilty for the rest of her life. Everyone will always remind her of this digression, through either aggressive words or strange looks. Sometimes, a woman displays happiness whereas her reality is very sad.

There are no cultural or entertainment activities for women of my age. My life consists of doing work for Ogero, the telecommunication company where I work, or doing housework. I wish there were a movie theater, a theater, or any cultural gathering for poetry reading. Besides going to church and belonging to an affiliated religious organization, my social life consists of visiting other people. That is a problem for those who do not like visits. Although sharing the same unpleasant situation, unmarried women in the village lack solidarity.

Have you thought of adopting a child?
One should give herself this hope. Society will not offer it. This thought comes to me from time to time. It is as if, in my environment, humane people are scarce. I would like to be a mother, but given the village conditions, that would be selfish and would lead to discrimination toward the child. Finally, we have to appreciate life with what we have and be positive. Perhaps this is my mission.

What about friendships between Christians and Muslims?
I currently do not have a Muslim friend. I am open-minded and open to others. At least, Muslims have more loyalty than Christians do. I do not differentiate between Christian or Muslim friendship, what is important is to feel comfortable with each other. Sometimes an acquaintance of 30 years may be incapable of understanding you, but sometimes one meeting with a person suffices for the friendship to be firmly established.

What about old age?
Although nursing homes exist throughout the country, interning an elderly parent in not yet well accepted. Keeping them at home is seen as the best and most accepted option.

Roula's answers deal mainly with binding traditions, repressed desire, and struggle to be accepted as a full human being. Her precise and strong voice translates a subtle plea for liberalization and societal challenges. Her evocative

description of the collectivity torn between tradition and the West indicates her hopes for a warm and inviting locale that would understand her feelings and needs. After all, marriage is not the only means for women to be successful. She confronts society by questioning traditions, which allegedly protect women, but in reality, demean them. Women are not only victims of men but of society because women continue to perpetuate the dominant gender roles in the house.

* * *

Hala's Thoughts: Sectarianism and Isolationism to the Detriment of a National Unity

Hala is about 50 years old. She grew up in Mashghara but left Lebanon at the beginning of the war. She finds that the new generations have no memory of the ways in which the two communities used to coexist and live together simply. The new generation, in my opinion she states, sees primarily the differences between us, which enhances our separation.

One of her relatives owned the only bakery in Mashghara. Prior to the 1980s, he baked 10,000 pounds of flour in order to provide bread for the entire population, regardless of whether or not they were Shi'i or Christian. Most importantly, most of the bakery's employees were Shi'i. Bread was graciously donated to the needy; and the male member of my family who owned the bakery never differentiated between his fellow citizens.

When the Hizbullah offered a Shi'i man the means to open a bakery, all the Shi'i in Mashghara began to boycott my relative's bakery. Production was reduced to one single bag of flour. Muslim women would say *Istaghfar Allah*, I ask God's forgiveness for buying bread from the Christians. Many Christians left, only about 10 percent of Christian families remain, about 300 Christians. Her family is now scattered between the United States, Australia, and France.

Gradually, Hizbullah islamicized Mashghara, she continued. At the time of Ayatollah Khomeini, large amounts of money were donated to Hizbullah. The Party of God opened offices in the village and offered every father with a young daughter $200 for her to begin wearing the headscarf. The Shi'i women who used to sell us their milk or vegetables began to look down on us. During the Raafsangani period in Iran, money became scarce in Mashghara, and the Muslim women changed and returned to trusting the Christian population. The Ahmadinajat era, similar to the Ayatollah era, poured money

into Hizbullah, and women are no longer only wearing the headscarf, but the entire black dress that is popular in Iran. Women from Mashghara who are now in their fifties had Shi'i classmates who dressed like their Christian counterparts, but I am now struck to see the children of former classmates wearing these long black gowns.

Roula and Hala are the given names for my interviewees. I have not disclosed their real names for privacy reasons.

PART II

Muslim Lebanese Women and an Islamic Modernity

CHAPTER 5

Islam in Lebanon: An Overview

Lebanon, crossroad of cultures and cradle of civilizations, launches a bridge between worlds. As a land of exchange between the West and the East, Christianity and Islam have, and will continue to for a long time, cross through Lebanon. A case in point is West Bekaa, which is made up of 40 percent Christians and 60 percent Muslims. Muslims belong to the Sunni and Druze communities, whereas in the Hermel and Baalbeck the majority of the population is Shi'i or *Metwali*.[1] The Shi'i presence goes back to the seventh century; at that time, the Muslim community split into Sunni and Shi'i sects. The Shi'i, who had been reduced to the status of dissenters after the twelve century, settled in Jabal 'Amel, part of Mount Lebanon, particularly in areas between the *Shouf qada'* (district) and Northern Galilee, in the north of the Bekaa valley, and in the towns of Hermel and Baalbeck.

The Sunni, named as such because they claim their authority from the "Sunna"—that is to say, the tradition of Mohammed—represent orthodox Islam. They hold a key position on the political and social planes mainly because they have the privilege of constituting an urban population in Lebanon, as opposed to the markedly rural majorities of the other two Muslim groups, the Shi'i and the Druze.

The Drusian sect[3] arose in Egypt during the early years of the eleventh century, and was founded by the disciples of Fatimite Caliph Hakim, of Shi'i origin. The importance of the Druze community can be judged by the brilliant role that it has played throughout the country's history.[4] Big landowners or small farmers, they have retained a strong feudal structure; today they make up a significant urban population as well. In the political and business spheres, a small but cultivated and efficient elite represents the community. The Druze religion is not very ritualistic, giving less emphasis to the outward expressions of worship than to moral obligations. The Druze woman's situation is quite liberal. The Druze, unlike other Islamic sects, forbid polygamy.



Figure 5.1 Lebanon map[2]: This diagrammatic representation shows the main cities Tripoli, Byblos, Beirut, Saida, and Tyr stretching along the east side of the Mediterranean Sea as well as Saghbine in the Bekaa Valley and Bikfaya in the Metn region of Mount Lebanon.

The Druze and most notably the Jumblatt family resided in Saghbine as landowners before the arrival of the Christians who bought the land from them and transformed it into their village.[5]

The new phenomenon of the emergence of the Shi'i community and in particular of the Party of God, Hizbullah,[6] is an outcome of a slow sociopolitical maturation process that occurred during the last two decades. What is the nature of Hizbullah's rapport with the other components of the Lebanese social structure? To what extent are Hizbullah's political decisions an offshoot of the Iranian raison d'être and even *raison d'état*? The question is whether Hizbullah's motivations are strictly limited to the Shi'i Lebanese community considerations, or go beyond the framework of Lebanon to be in line

with a larger regional Iranian strategy.[7] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr refers to the network of Iranian-Lebanese Shi'i as transnational: "By transnationalism I mean an increasing interconnectedness in human relations across national borders."[8] Moreover, she invokes closed-door activities directly related to promoting Hizbullah in Lebanon and of promoting Iran as the Vatican of Shi'ism. Iran's funds are poured to the Lebanese Hizbullah to build institutions as a means to advance the regional Iranian strategy for developing projects for execution in a Lebanese context.[9] Nonetheless, she points out that in an era of transnationalism, religious identities cannot be studied outside their national context. Sabrina Mervin in an article titled "The Iranian Link" refers to the Hizbullah as an "extension" of the Iranian Revolution.[10] Na'im Qassem, vice-general secretary of Hizbullah, introduces a chapter of his book on *Regional and International Relations* declaring that the "Iranian Revolution of February 11, 1979 reverberated as an earthquake across the region affecting the map of alliances and the extent of hegemony as well as the very interests of external powers."[11]

To understand this political landscape, it is important to examine the historical and sociological elements that paved the way for the birth of the Party of God in the 1980s. First, a general overview of Lebanese politics is necessary, from the National Pact (1943) to the Doha Accord in 2008 when the balance of power swung to Shi'i Hizbullah. The discussion will be followed by a sketch of the Shi'i as a sociopolitical community in Lebanon. Next, the doctrine and political elements of Hizbullah and the circumstances that marked its creation as well as the roots and the guidelines of its actions will be analyzed. Finally, the effects of the 2009 elections will be examined in relation to Lebanon's future with a focus on women's participation and voice.

Chronology of Lebanon from 1943 to 2008

The National Pact ended up as a compromise between Christian and Muslim communities. In 1943, Christian Lebanese renounced the French Protectorate whereas Muslims renounced the fusion of Lebanon with Syria. The National Pact is a nonwritten agreement giving an Arab image to Lebanon; thus Lebanon is included as a member in the Arab League, and divides governmental and administrative power between the three main religious communities—Christians, Sunnis, and Shi'i—according to the population sizes of each group. The National Pact spelled out the Lebanese formula *sigha* based on the census of 1932.[12] At this point in time, Christians outnumbered the other Muslim communities. In 1943, Lebanon gained independence from France and proceeded to build the Lebanese state. In 1969, the Cairo Accord allowed the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon to

bear arms and to use Southern Lebanon, called "*Fatah* Land" at that time, as a base to launch attacks against the Israeli state. First, the Palestinians controlled Southern Lebanon, forming a Palestinian Army, which mistreated the Lebanese Shi'i and Christian citizens. Second, the heavily armed Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) led by Yasser Arafat, who saw that they could not liberate the land confiscated by Israel in 1948, used their arms to interfere with Lebanon's internal affairs. The PLO thus shifted its focus, occupying the entirety of Lebanon as a surrogate country.[13] This action would have forced the Christian communities to leave their country if they had not militarized against the PLO. This solution suited both the Palestinians and Israelis. By this approach, the Palestinian refugees would have gained a part of Lebanon as a substitute for their lost home state by declaring part of Lebanon as a Palestinian state, and the Israelis would live in peace without having to deal with the issue of the return of the Palestinian refugees. Some sources said this plan, then silently backed by the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, was to displace Christians to Canada and the United States, but there is no written document confirming this plan of action; however, it was a widely spread public belief. Lebanese Christians militarized themselves to defend the sovereignty of their country. The Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon was about 400,000 versus a Lebanese population of around 3,000,000 in 1975. Thus, a war began between the Lebanese Christians and the Palestinians, a conflict that would ultimately generate an internal Lebanese war. The war, which stretched from 1975 until 1990, began after an armed conflict between a Palestinian commando unit and members of the right-wing Christian political party, the *Kataeb*, and other Christian parties.

In 1990 the Ta'ef Accord, which was the agreement between the Christian and Muslim communities of Lebanon under the Saudi mediation created in the city of Ta'ef in Saudi Arabia, formally ended the country's war. This accord deepened Lebanon's sectarian system by rearranging its top state leaders' sectarian control via constitutional amendments. The 1990 constitutional amendments usurped many of the traditional functions of the Maronite president by strengthening the exclusively Sunni-held position of prime minister. It also decreed that parliamentary seats were to be distributed equally between Christians and Muslims.

Though the Syrians had been on Lebanese land since 1976, interfering in its internal affairs, a period of rebuilding the state and reconstruction transformed Lebanon and put its institutions back at work. This period lasted about 16 years and reached its peak in 1992 under the leadership of Rafiq Hariri (prime minister, 1992–1998 and 2000–2004). His assassination on February 14, 2005, led to the birth of the "Cedar Revolution" and the Lebanese *Intifida.*[14] The Syrians were urged to stop their meddling in

Lebanon's sovereignty, particularly after the assassination of many prominent charismatic Lebanese leaders who possessed the leadership qualities to bring Lebanon back to the path of prosperity, coexistence, and peace.

In 2004, Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and his strongest ally, the Druze Lebanese leader Walid Jumblatt, and others were working on a United Nations (UN) resolution (1559) to mandate the withdrawal of the Syrian occupying army in Lebanon. Resolution 1559 would allow the Lebanese to govern themselves without Syrian dominance in foreign and internal policies. The Syrians interfered in all Lebanese matters, imposing their decisions through kidnapping, imprisonment, and even assassination. The first assassination occurred in the period preceding the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon when the international community and, in particular, the United States, pressured them to leave Lebanese territory. Marwan Hamade, the advisor of the Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt, survived the first car bomb attack, which was followed by numerous other car bomb attacks killing many influential Lebanese national figures—the cream of the crop—ranging from members of parliament to government ministers to journalists. Their common denominator was their opposition to the Syrian regime policy in Lebanon and their ally Hizbullah in Lebanon.

Among the victims was Samir Kassir, a prominent journalist of the daily newspaper *An-Nahar*, characterized by its freedom of speech and its political platform for a free and prosperous Lebanon. Another victim was Gebran Tueni, the son of the prominent Ghassan Tueni. Ghassan's father was the founder of *An-Nahar*, a well-known editor and publisher, like all men in his family. Ghassan was a former representative of Lebanon in the UN, and a former secretary for several governments. Ghassan was still the most respected figure in Lebanese journalism until his passing away in June, 2012. Gebran represented the Lebanese youth and their vision for a sovereign and independent Lebanon; he mainly had the courage to articulate the democratic and international vocation of Lebanon. Pierre Gemayel, the son of the former president Amin Gemayel and the grandson of Pierre Gemayel, the founder of the *Kataeb* political party, was also assassinated. Women were not immune to this violence. May Chidiac, a journalist who had the courage to speak up her mind, was also the victim of the same ordeal, a car bombing. Miraculously, she survived the attempted assassination but lost an arm and a leg.

The 33-day war was launched in July 12, 2006, in Southern Lebanon as a response to the disappearance of two Israeli soldiers; Hizbullah claimed responsibility for that kidnapping and the war began between Hizbullah and the Israeli army. The Shi'i living in Southern Lebanon evacuated their villages and moved to southern Beirut, and Hizbullah claimed more rights in the Lebanese government, invoking its resistance to the Israeli military power

in defense of Lebanon. In May 2008 the Doha Accord[15] swung Lebanon's balance of power to Shi'i Hizbullah in exchange for their commitment to not bear arms against their Lebanese compatriots for internal political interests. The country, which had lacked a president since November 2008, elected Michel Suleiman immediately, and a new government was formed with 11 out of 16 ministries going to the Hizbullah bloc. New parliamentary elections took place on June 7, 2009, and though 58 percent voted that Hizbullah would have to disarm (against 42 percent for their continued power) Iran's Shi'i surrogate Party of God did not do so. In defiance of two UN Security Council resolutions, Hizbullah's armed militia won formal national acceptance and the right to possess an independent weapons arsenal.

Some Middle East sources consider the Doha deal on Lebanon compensation for Hizbullah, its reward for resisting the armed onslaught without the aid of the Lebanese army. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hizbullah in Lebanon, often states that the 33-day war marks the most resounding strategic debacle the West and Israel have experienced since Hamas' forcible takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2005 and Israel's failure to smash the Shi'i armed strength in 2006.[16]

The Shi'i Community in Lebanon[17]

The affirmation of the presence and the identity of the Shi'i as a sociopolitical community in the Lebanese makeup followed a long maturation. The Shi'i community has struggled with great adversity during the contemporary history of Lebanon.

Under the Ottoman Empire, the rights of Shi'i were not recognized. In the nineteenth century, the administration divided Lebanon between two *kaimacamats* (political and administrative districts), and formed a consultative council composed of Christians and Druze. In 1845, following conflicts between religious communities, France and Great Britain, the powers of the time, interfered and asked the Ottomans to stop the confrontation. Thus, the Turkish minister of state created in the two *kaimacamats* a mixed council—one per community—of judges representing the Maronites, Greek Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Sunnis, and Druze; the Sunni judge also represented the Shi'i community. This unfair situation lasted until the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and practically until 1926 when the Lebanese, under the French Mandate, recognized the Shi'i community as an entity.[18] This recognition facilitated the proclamation of the Greater Lebanon[19] in 1920. The addition of the peripheral areas to the *Petit Liban* had considerable effects on the socioeconomic structure of the new entity of Lebanon.

Gap between "Center" and "Periphery" versus Musa el-Sadr and *'Ulama* Actions

Due to its autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon had known substantial development in infrastructure, culture, and education. The propagation of private missionary schools and the founding of the two universities, the American University in 1866[20] and the Jesuit University in 1875,[21] as well as the broad opening of the country to the West, allowed Lebanon to have the privilege to be the beacon of cultural and pedagogical light for the entire region. In the meantime, the infrastructure developed in Mount Lebanon and Beirut became the de facto capital of the limited Lebanese entity. The *Petit Liban* and Beirut particularly benefited from the development of businesses, industry, medical infrastructure including hospitals, and the transportation links along the coastal route to Damascus. In 1920, the annexation of Tripoli, Saida, and the Bekaa Valley to the *Petit Liban* produced an entity characterized by deep cleavages between the "center," represented by Beirut and Lebanon Mountains, and the "periphery," areas represented by the newly attached areas. "The periphery" which was directly governed by the Ottoman Empire, did not benefit from the boost.

The gap remained until 1943 and set up the germ of an unfortunate social situation. "Periphery" areas remained undeveloped. The Maronite-Sunni character of the National Pact and the sharing of power instituted after independence from the French Mandate in 1948 contributed to the marginalization of the Shi'i community. In addition, the postindependence political Shi'i leaders were feudal traditional leaders disconnected from the realities of their constituency.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the implantation of armed Palestinian organizations in Southern Lebanon, the resurgence of *Feda'yyin* (political zealots) operations against Israel, and Israel's retaliation in areas inhabited mostly by Shi'i added to their misfortune. As a result, a progressive sustained exodus to the city, mainly to the southern suburbs (known collectively as al-dahiya), added to the Shi'i disadvantaged population. Al-dahiya constituted the so-called misery belt of the city. It is in this potentially explosive context that a group of *Shi'i 'ulama* who had just received their religious education in Najaf or Qom[22] disembarked in Beirut. Three of them, Imam Mussa el-Sadr, Sheikh Muhammed Mehdi Chamesddine, and Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, were quickly distinguished by their charisma, their religious culture, and their vision to help their community break away from the situation of "disinherited" or disowned. Adopting a low profile, they conducted conferences, meetings, and debates in clubs and mosques in mainly Shi'i zones.[23]

Musa el-Sadr was born in Qom, Iran, in 1929 to the prominent Lebanese el-Sadr family of theologians. His father, originally from Tyre, was Ayatollah Sadr el-Din el-Sadr. In 1956, Musa el-Sadr moved from Qom to the capital Tehran and obtained a degree in Islamic Jurisprudence and Political Sciences from Tehran University. He moved back to Qom and later to Najaf to study theology and Islamic philosophy. He accepted an invitation to become a leading Shi'i figure in the city of Tyre in 1960, and quickly became a prominent advocate of the Shi'i population of Lebanon.[24] Using his charisma, the Imam Musa el-Sadr increased his area of influence, and by the end of 1960s, he became a political power in his community. In 1967, he was successful in obtaining permission from the central power to form the High Shi'i Council (HSC). This provided the community with an institution able to affirm the identity and the political presence of the Shi'i. Traditional politicians saw him as a threat capable of reducing their roles. In spite of their opposition, Musa el-Sadr created a popular movement, the "Movement of the Deprived," with a mission of responding to the political and social aspirations of the Shi'i community. He particularly focused on the social and economic development of the southern areas, the Bekaa, and the suburbs of Beirut. One of the tacit objectives was to shield the community from the growing influence of secular Pan Arabic movement, leftist movements, and the armed Palestinian organizations; and to create an alternative to the feudal traditional leaders, who maintained the community in a state of chronic lethargy.

In February 1974, his discourse marked the birth of the Lebanese Shi'ism: "Our name is not Metwali, our name is one of refusing, one of vengeance, those who revolt against all sorts of tyranny. Even if we have to shed our blood, pay our lives . . . We no longer want good sentiments, but action. We are tired of words, feelings, and discourses . . . Starting today, I will not keep quiet if you remain inert."[25]

Facing the military escalation in Arkoub in the south of Lebanon, he secretly created in the 1970s an armed militia trained by *Fatah*, a Palestinian militia group. He created the *Amal*, or "hope" movement, which allowed mobilization of the Shi'i disinherited into a structured community.[26] This prevented secularized political parties such as the Communist Party, or the Baas, from winning this population over to their causes. This political culture and the awakening of the Shi'i community in general paved the way to the creation of Hizbullah in the 1980s.

The Birth of Hizbullah, the Roots of Its Political Action, and the *Wali el Faqih*[27]

In their analysis, Michel Georgiou and Michel Touma argue that in the 1980s the emergence of Hizbullah on the Lebanese scene is undoubtedly the fruit

of the implementation of the Islamic Republic Revolution in Iran. The Israeli operation "Peace in Galilee" in 1982 constituted in this context the catalyst to the creation of the fundamentalist Shi'i party. The context of the dissemination of the party in Lebanon, the importance of the martyrdom cult for Hizbullah, and finally the main political orientations of fundamentalism are crucial aspects of this era.

The establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, and the politics of exporting the revolution, constituted the catalyst for the development of the circle of fundamentalist influence in the country. When Ayatollah Khomeini took power in Tehran, small Islamist Shi'i groups were already active in Lebanon on a small scale. They were mainly formed from the gathering of the clerical congregation, *'Ulama* of the Bekaa (UB), of Islamic Committee (IC), and the Lebanese branch of the Iraqi Shi'i party *al-da'wa*; they had Sheikh Muhammad Hassan Fadlallah as their spokesperson in Lebanon.[28] The "Peace in Galilee" operation in 1982 and the rapid burst of Tsahal[29] to Beirut incited small *Shi'i* groups to conduct attacks against Israel, calling these attacks operations of resistance. This radical movement was reinforced in June by the apparition of a dissident group in *Amal* led by Nabih Berri (after the death of Musa el-Sadr) in 1978.[30]

The scale of the Israeli offensive in 1982 forced the leaders of these groups to put into operation a multipartisan structure. Its foundation and strategies of actions have three axes: First, Islam as ideology, practice, thought, and faith constitutes its path of global action for a better life. Second, Sheikh Na'im Qassem considered the resistance against Israeli occupation as a priority, which necessitated the creation of an adequate structure for *Jihad* to mobilize all necessary potentialities. Third, leadership belongs to the supreme guide (at the time Ayatollah Khomeini) as the Prophet and Imam's heir; he defines the guidelines of action for the Islamic nation, and his decisions are binding.[31] As a result of this multipartisan agreement, a committee of nine members representing the three organizations—UB, IC, and *Amal*—submitted a document known as the "Manifesto of the Nine," which endorsed the objectives indicated above to Ayatollah Khomeini to dissolve the three parties to form one federative party named Hizbullah. Ayatollah Khomeini approved the document, thus granting his custodianship as the Jurist-Theologian.[32] From 1982 to 1985, the process matured and Hizbullah unveiled its program. This new formation immediately received the political, logistic, and military support of Iran, sending Revolution Guard experts and armaments through Syria. They established training camps in the Bekaa to form Hizbullah's militia and instilled the martyr cult model in their constituencies.

Between 1982 and 1985, Hizbullah set up its priority to resist Tsahal, the Israeli army. Despite the inequity of the two forces, Shi'i combatants were able to harm the Israeli army. That these minor attacks by the Shi'i against

the Israeli giant were successes can be explained by the notion of martyrdom in the Shi'i unconscious. This notion refers to the martyrdom of Imam Hussein in the battle of Kabala (680), a myth and model that is to be followed by each individual, particularly the young, who receive an education based on the ideal of martyrdom.[33] In this vein, Sheikh Na'im Qassem,[34] Hizbullah's deputy secretary general, indicates that people who receive an education founded uniquely on the search for victory give up more easily if they realize that victory is distant or uncertain. On the contrary, an education based on martyrdom and self-sacrifice increase the efficiency of their actions. If they die as martyrs, they would accomplish what they vowed to do. To die as a martyr in service of God's precepts becomes the supreme honor for every young Shi'i. The objective is not to win a direct and immediate military victory but to have the privilege to become a martyr, to self-sacrifice for the love of God. In addition, life hereafter promises eternal happiness. To remain attached to this life, motivated by material contingencies, is therefore insignificant compared to the honor that represents the martyr to the service of God. "Victory cometh only from Allah, the mighty, the wise."[35]

Mothers themselves sustained the martyr cult. In an interview on Al-Jazeera news segments called *Everywomen*, the host interviewed two Hizbullah women in private, one woman who lost her husband and her own daughter, Amal, who lost both her father and her husband. Both women reiterated the fact that they were supporters of Hizbullah, and Amal added that in addition to her strong support to the resistance, she hopes that one day her son will want to join the movement. She makes sure that her son understands how and why his father died, and instills in him a sense of pride for the martyr of his father and for his country.[36]

This martyr-oriented view on the value of terrestrial life differs greatly from the Western view, in terms of the perception of the true meaning of life, and the conduct toward managing public affairs. Members of Hizbullah believe that Westerners do not understand the spiritual Islamic orientation. Therefore, the young combatants sanctified the notion of martyrdom and based their political resistance on it. Then, after forming their militia and reinforcing emotional and so-called religious behavior, Hizbullah continued with their political agenda to gain power in Lebanon.

Until the 1980s Hizbullah kept a low profile about the Israeli occupation of a large part of the Lebanese territory. Hizbullah came out into the open in February 1984 following an uprising led by *Amal* and the Socialist Progressive Party of Jumblatt in West Beirut against the president Amin Gemayel. This uprising allowed Hizbullah to move its institutions to its headquarters in the southern suburb of Beirut. In 1985, Hizbullah made public its political project through an open letter drafted to the oppressed in Lebanon.

Hizbullah's political document summarizes the ideology and the doctrine of the party. The document declares the theoretical existence of an Islamic state but also indicates that such project should be based on the premise of free choice of the population. However, for practical reasons, they explain that Hizbullah does not intend to establish an Islamic Republic in Lebanon but wishes to remain attached to Islam and the basis of its action and thought. Concretely, given the Lebanese reality, their objective is to consolidate the "multiconfessional" system that would grant all communities equal political participation.[37] In 1992, their decision to participate in the legislative elections meant their acceptance of being part of the sectarian Lebanese system despite their dogmatic view. Some consider that accepting the multiconfessional Lebanese system, and even looking toward a serious rapprochement with non-Muslim groups, means that Hizbullah tailored a nationalist, even a patriotic agenda without, however, neglecting the resistance.[38]

Leaders of Hizbullah declared that their support to the multiconfessional system to the detriment of the Islamic Republic is due to their will to present to the world the Lebanese formula or *sigh*a as a successful example of conviviality between diverse communities, which is the antithesis of the "Zionist" project based on the edification of one state for one community.[39] They claim that the Lebanese formula is based on pluralism, respect of diversity, and safeguard of liberties. Seeking to be pragmatic, the executive board of the party asked for the strict application of the Ta'ef Agreement after the elaboration of a new electoral law maintaining the actual equilibrium between communities.

In addition, the hostility toward the Israeli entity led the party leaders to declare their total solidarity with the Palestinian people in their (armed) conflict with Israel. However, they have not explicitly pledged their help and concrete support to the Transjordan and Gaza population. Hizbullah condemns blind terrorism but refuses to condemn the suicide operations carried by Palestinians. Hizbullah defends its hostile attitude toward the Western civilization; however, the opposition is not against Western countries as such, but more toward the "Zionist colonialist attitude."[40]

This reasoning causes the Lebanese people to wonder whether Hizbullah's priority is given to the "culture of territory" [national by essence] or the "culture of space" [regional by essence].[41] In the latter context, its doctrine imposes a doctrinal submission of all strategic decisions to the *wali el faqih* or the supreme guide of the Islamic revolution Imam Khamenei. The recognition of the supranational and absolute political and religious authority is a main characteristic of Hizbullah's doctrine. *Wilayat el faqh* is for the successor of the Prophet, or an Imam descent of the Imam Ali to lead the Islamic nation. Jaafarite Shi'i believe that 12 Imams (*Mahdi*) existed in history; the 12th disappeared but is still expected to reappear in order to deliver the

Shi'i from oppression and misery. In the meantime, *wali el faqih* leads the community.[42]

The modern Shi'i trend is rooted in the Islamic Revolution and marks a historical turn.[43] Before the accession of Khomeini, the notion of *wali el faqih* did not carry such political importance. The Shi'i cleric in authority has not held power in a religious community since the time of the Ummayad's oppression in the eighth century. Later, in the nineteenth century, religious chiefs in Najaf decided upon the active participation of the '*Ulama* in political life. Reformists formed in Najaf constituted the first generation, represented by Ayatollah Sistani and Khoi, and the el-Sadr and Hakim families represent the second generation of Shi'i clerics who were dedicated to the emerging revolution. Since the accession of Ayatollah Khomeini, Shi'i recognizes no other authority other than *wali el faqih*. Furthermore, the allegiance to *wali el faqih* means fusion between the political and the religious; both are viewed as authoritative systems. This victory led to the principle of exporting the revolution. The question now is how does the mandatory recourse to *wali el faqih* translate to the entire Lebanese multiconfessional population? The Lebanese Hizbullah recognizes the authority of the *wali el faqih*, which is mainly facilitated by ancestral relations between el-Sadr and Hakim families for strategic and doctrinal questions. *Wali el faqih* practically has the Prophet's authority in terms of safeguarding the nation's interests in all matters. In 1992, Hizbullah had to decide whether or not to participate in Lebanon's legislative elections.[44] The party formed a committee of 12 members to debate the option and made recommendations and submitted the resolution to the Imam Khamenei who gave his accord. Should the Lebanese political question conform to the doctrinal faith of the Islamic Republic of Iran? Would then any option of war or peace in Lebanon belong to the domain of the *wali el faqih?*[45]

What is the spatial nature of Hizbullah's territory (loyalty)? The *umma*, or community of Muslim believers, is obviously much larger than the state of Lebanon. Now, the legitimate political Lebanese debate is to exhort Hizbullah to give up its arms and to renounce the pursuit of resistance as an "extrastate" group, outside the army. As it was originally an Islamist party, its foundation on Lebanese land is directly linked to a factor that goes beyond the national territory, to the Iranian Revolution. In this case, the concept of '*assabiyya*[46] developed by Ibn Khaldun[47] seems to be prevalent. Recruitment of combatants is exclusively from Shi'i milieu and Islamist families preferably. Militants are mobilized through a *da'wa* (preaching) of religious nature. Hizbullah evolved as a community insensitive to any territorial Lebanese culture, preferring the regional culture. This might be because the Shi'i community has always believed itself to be marginalized, and belonging to the regional '*assabiyya* sect in revolt against the local economic and

political system. They rejected assimilation to the dominant culture and exhibited a natural disposition to be liberated of any territorial order imposed upon them.

Looking to the future, what is Hizbullah's real allegiance? What are the limits of the resistance: the territory of *Cheb'a* farms[48] or the liberation of the seven villages in the Golan, or even Jerusalem? Such resistance and liberation would be in support of other Islamist movements such as Hamas or the Islamic Jihad.[49] Is maintaining a military wing part of its refusal of integration? Hizbullah maintains a military wing and takes the sovereignty from the state in Southern Lebanon and the *marba' amni*[50] in Beirut. This act reveals a religious '*assabiyya* that integrates the institutions of the state but refuses to disarm in order to leave the defense of the state to the Lebanese army. Ibn Khaldun on '*assabiyya* argued that a group in its first stages needs to maintain its '*assabiyya* to keep its predominance, and refuse to decline for the sake of building the nation *'umran*.[51] This created complications in the crucial parliamentary elections held on June 7, 2009, in Lebanon.

Effect of the Elections on the Future of Lebanon's Existence and Identity

The Lebanese population has become polarized between two camps, the partisans of March 14[52] and those of March 8.[53] *L'Orient Le Jour* published an opinion piece written by Thomas Morus, but that reflected the sentiments of a larger body of people, titled "Pour les Chrétiens, deux alternatives et un choix" ("For Christians, two alternatives and one choice") on May 22, 2009, a few days before the crucial elections. In this article, Morus stated his belief that this partisanship reflects a polarization because the reasoning behind it belongs to the past or to unrealistic and irrational future projection. He believes some Lebanese have lost a major human quality, the capacity of discernment. Many citizens, even professionals such as doctors, engineers, and professors, have put aside their reason, and are focused on their personal interests at the detriment of their children's future. The question that remains unanswered for many Lebanese is how a large portion of the population came to be blinded by hatred or revenge against some deeply rooted politicians. Indeed, many Christians dislike and hold grudges against politicians such as the Hariri family, Samir Geagea, Amin Gemayel, Walid Jumblatt, and many others. Their reasoning is understandable but, Morus argues, they should not sacrifice the future of the country, because these politicians made a favorable choice for the country. Morus states that these politicians, regardless of their past errors, had made the choice for a state of law, for democracy, for civil liberties and a free economy.

Morus continues to wonder about the mental state of some of his compatriots; how can they sacrifice the future of their descendents just to quiet down the bitterness of past actions? At this crucial time, reason and logic should transcend sentiments of settling past transgressions. He claims that the doctrine of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), which aligned with Hizbullah, is dangerous and irreversible because Hizbullah has become a movement fostering regional and world change. Members of the FPM seem to be unaware of the wolf among the sheep. The danger resides in the fact that the alliance between Hizbullah and the FPM will lead the Lebanese to a collective suicide. Logic dictates to vote for candidates working for peace and for economic growth—even if they occasionally stray from the straight and narrow—rather than voting for others promising indefinite war in the name of principles that are foreign to our reality, our culture, and our existence. The history of politics has precedents of these sorts of alliances, which end when the most powerful decides to end them and the winner takes all. The Lebanese people have not forgotten the humiliation they endured during a period of almost three decades (1976–2005) where the Syrian Secret Service had access to daily life details. In fact, during this time the Syrian totalitarian regime of the El-Assad family controlled the Lebanese army and received huge revenues from government-collected taxes. This regime had power over all the political system and effectively deconstructed our democratic system by controlling elections; making and unmaking presidents and speakers of the parliament; and controlled even the judicial system by approving judges' appointments and assassinating any political figure who opposed their meddling in Lebanon's government. They appointed Syrian army officials as the head of the Syrian occupational army in Lebanon to oversee all Lebanese institutions and considered Lebanon as a Syrian province. Since the independence of Lebanon in 1943 and the independence of Syria in the same year, the Syrians did not recognize Lebanon as a sovereign country and refused to establish an exchange of ambassadors between the two countries. Should Iran, through Hizbullah, substitute the Syrian regime? Should the country move towards the unknown future?

Fortunately, most Lebanese agree on a project of peace, progress, and modernity, and they reject any intention to involve them in the conflicts of others. Most importantly, they see the future through the prism of hope and not the prism of revenge and hatred.

I made it a point to come to Lebanon to exercise my civil rights because I felt Lebanon was threatened. In 2009, I went to Mashghara, my husband's hometown, located in the Bekaa Valley to vote. The arch dressed at the entrance of the city troubled me; it gave me the impression of being in a small Iranian city. The large arch is filled with pictures of Ayatollah Khomeni and

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, in addition to other Iranian clerics. The tremendous change of the city—so prosperous in the past and almost unrecognizable now—worried me. Is this a specimen of what other areas of Lebanon will look like should Hizbullah and its ally the FPM (the March 8 bloc) win the elections? At this moment, I remembered the strong statement US Vice President Joe Biden made during his recent visit to Lebanon on May 20, 2009. He reiterated the US determination to be on Lebanon's side to safeguard its independence and its total sovereignty, to deploy its legitimate army on its entire territory totaling 10,452 km^2, and to make free political decisions without any regional or international interference. I realized the danger of the March 8 bloc's project to engage Lebanon in the path of revolutions and regional wars, to keep it in a state of instability, paralyzing its institutions, and last but not least to obstruct modernity and progress.

In the 2009 elections, 600 candidates vied for 128 seats divided in parity between Christians and Muslims. The protagonists were made up of the actual majority, a diversified political entity comprising Muslims, Sunni, most of the Druze, and a portion of the Christians, and were allied to the moderate Arab world and the Occident. On the other side, the opposition was led by the powerful Hizbullah, an Islamist Shi'i party and the other portions of the Christians, the FPM, and a constellation of small pro-Syria parties. The Christian electorate had the power to move the vote in one way or another. The political positions of each camp reflected the interplay of regional and even international power. The actual majority insisted on keeping Lebanon outside regional conflicts, on keeping good relations with the Arab world and the Occident, and on going back to the armistice with Israel. On the contrary, Hizbullah articulated the resistance against Israel as the main struggle facing Lebanon. For seven years, Hizbullah military power transformed Southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley to a battleground by fighting proxy wars. The risk of Hizbullah winning the elections would change the face of Lebanon, and effectively make Hizbullah a state within a state.

Considering the gravity of the situation, Lebanese bishops met in isolation for three days to discuss the matter. On the eve of the election, the Maronite patriarch made a strong and decisive statement to the press at this dangerous moment that threatened the existence of Lebanon, as a pluralist country. He urged the Christian population to vote for the sovereignty of Lebanon and to keep its international vocation for coexistence and democracy represented by the March 14 movement.

On June 8, the outcome of the elections proved that "Christians refuse to discontinue their historical constants," according to members of the March 14 movement.[54] Lebanon successfully passed the democratic experience test. The international community and Arab countries considered this

important election with great concern, fear, and circumspection. Once more, Lebanon proved to be on the path of peace and democracy. These elections are an outcome of a real referendum, a real choice, and a real promise for a sovereign state, free and independent, and are based on ideals promoted by the Cedar Revolution. The prevailing peaceful climate contrasts starkly with the waves of violence and terror, which tended to intimidate the Lebanese people during the last decades. Therefore, the current minority March 8 bloc, which got 42 percent of the vote, versus the March 14 movement, which got 58 percent of the vote, must not only formally accept the choice of the Lebanese people, they should also commit to respecting the democratic behavior inside and outside legitimate institutions, away from the "logic" of paralysis and blind adventurism.[55] Indeed, Hizbullah and the FPM backed by Syria and Iran impeded the formation of the new cabinet for six months due to their military might.

My vote took place in a public school comprising several rooms. Here, women voted in a different room than men, and Christians voted in a different room than Muslims and other minorities. The elections that took place under the supervision of national and international controllers were democratic. The young Minister of Interior Ziad Baroud efficiently modernized the entire electoral system in the American way, coaching and educating the electoral committees who were managing the process. International and national observers wrote a satisfactory report on the election. Former US president Carter, the head of the international supervision committee, and Khose Sanshiz, the head of the European supervision committee, joined their efforts with members of the National Democratic committee to observe the ballots located in different *qada*'.[56] For the first time, legislative elections took place in one day and in a peaceful and convivial way without interference or pressure from authorities. In their report, Jimmy Carter and Khose Sanshiz congratulated Lebanese people for their commitment to the democratic process and in particular for their enthusiasm, which was evidenced by the high turnout that reached an average of 52 percent compared to 37 percent in 2005. The Carter Center encourages electoral reform of all its stakeholders. They made the following recommendations:

- Increased protection for ballot secrecy through use of official, standardized, preprinted ballots
- Increased independence of electoral authority
- Positive measures to increase the representation of women in parliament
- The adoption of changes aimed at making the electoral system more representative

- Implementation of recent legislation regarding lowering the voting age and the facilitation of overseas voting
- Steps to ensure equal participation of disabled persons in the electoral process[57]

All observers, in particular the Yemenite former prime minister Abdel Rehman el-Ariani, congratulated Lebanon for the most transparent and quiet elections in the Arab world. They were satisfied with female participation in the voting but were a little disappointed by the scarcity of women's candidacies to parliamentary seats. Seven women declared their candidacies: Nayla Tueni, Beirut 1; Strida Tawk, Becharre in the north, Magda Bridi, Zahle; Gilberte Zuein, Kesrouan; Ghenwa Jalloul, Beirut 3; Bahia Hariri, Saida; Norma Ferzli, Bekaa East. Four of them won: Nayla Tueni as a Greek Orthodox from the March 14 movement, Strida Taouk as a Maronite also from the March 14 movement, Bahia Hariri as a Sunni from the March 14 movement, and Gilberte Zuein as a Maronite from the March 8 bloc.

Among these female candidates, Bahia Hariri is the only veiled woman. She occupied the position of Minister of Education and she appeared unveiled to the public. However, following the death of her brother and former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, she wore the veil, which, according to a traditional interpretation of the veil's meaning, symbolizes modesty and closeness to God.

As I have demonstrated, religion and politics are closely related in Lebanon. Our main concern in this study is the impact of an Islamic state on Lebanese women in general. How has and how will Hizbullah influence the liberation of women in our societies? I was somehow uncomfortable looking at symbols and slogans the FPM bloc used in the campaign. On main roads, a visitor would see on billboards a picture of a pretty woman, looking very Westernized, and the phrase "Sois belle et vote" ("Be pretty and vote"). Is not this slogan contradictory to Hizbullah's religious beliefs and on the steps it has taken to ensure Lebanese women veil themselves as a symbol of modesty? During the last few decades, the resurgence in the habit of veiling for Shi'i women changed the image of Lebanon as a multiconfessional country to that of a firmly Islamic country.

The veiling phenomenon began in the beginning of the 1990s with Hizbullah's emergence. To accelerate the veiling occurrence, Hizbullah paid as incentive an amount of approximately $300 per month to every woman and particularly young girls who wore the *hijab*. Is this a lack of coordination or just a fundamental difference in the ideology of the two allied parties, the FPM and Hizbullah? They probably agreed to disagree on this issue.

Moreover, what does beauty have to do with the vote? A vote should be the result of a careful thinking and deliberating. Is the FPM targeting only pretty women? What about less attractive or intellectual women? After ignoring the majority of female citizens, the FPM was only interested in their vote. Indeed, the FPM began advocating for changes and reforms; however, nothing in the platform mentioned or suggested a determination to help Lebanese women struggling for their right to be considered fully recognized citizens. Many women discussed feeling deep offense from the FPM slogan. The slogan portrays women as objects, whose role is to incite a man's desire. Here, one can find a similarity with Hizbullah's position on veiling.[58] Instead of convincing women to vote for them, the FPM stirred the anger of women and other feminists.

On the contrary, the March 14 movement showed the picture of a woman and the slogan "Sois égale et vote" ("Be equal and vote"). This slogan seems to be more representative of the actual status and interests of the Lebanese women. Nayla Tueni, the youngest female parliamentary candidate in the 2009 parliamentary elections, demanded a larger participation of women in general and in all aspects of daily life. On the eve of June 7, the date of the elections, a journalist interviewing her on the Lebanese television channel "Future" unexpectedly contacted her grandfather Ghassan Tueni and asked him what she had to offer and why he endorsed her candidacy. He answered that she was a capable political candidate seeking her father's parliamentary seat; and, in addition, she was the first young female candidate (she was only 27) representing the needs of the younger generation. He stated that though her biography was short, her experience was large. She is the head of *An Nahar* for youth, a weekly paper founded by her late father Gebran. She has proved her capability of managing the daily newspaper after the death of her father, giving her own opinions, and more importantly, giving a progressive image for the future. Her platform to develop Ashrafieh, a Christian quarter in Beirut, carried new, better-developed plans than any other area in Lebanon. She is determined to keep the great image of Lebanon, and adding the sky, as a metaphor for Lebanon's purity and representation of the Cedar Revolution, will remain blue like the rooster of *An Nahar*.[59]

The participation of women in the election demonstrates how varied the situation of women in Lebanon can be. A comprehensive description (of this variety) of woman in Islam goes beyond the scope of our study. We are limiting ourselves here to a quick study, without entering into the divergences of opinion between jurists and theologians.

The custom of the veil existed before Islam, but in a more restricted form. "Il y a encore peu de temps, une femme qui, au Liban, entrait dans une église sans avoir les cheveux couverts, faisait scandale." (Little time has passed since

a woman who, in Lebanon, entered a church without having covered hair, made a scandal.)[60] Here, one recalls the words of Saint Paul in the first epistle to the Corinthians, evoking the accepted custom in all of the churches, which was therefore that of all of the ancient Orient. Today, the veil has been nearly abandoned by Christian women, but it is still worn by Muslims. For a better understanding of the resurgence of the veiling phenomenon, the differences between Christian and Muslim women, we will take a historical look at this modern debate in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

Struggle in Modern Islam

To situate the modern epoch of modern Arab thought, it is indispensable to describe the sociocultural context and to raise the question of women's liberation. During the nineteenth century, Egypt and Lebanon encountered a great deal of progress during a period known as the Arab Renaissance. Egypt began to modernize, first, with Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in 1789, then further under the reign of Mohamed Ali. At the same time in Lebanon, reformers appeared to be rethinking Islam in modern terms and envisioning the state's administration in a way that was more appropriate for the necessity of the times.

This epoch corresponds to European expansionism. During this time, the Islamic world presented itself as an intellectual hub, which tried to adapt to new forces, while trying not to lose its "soul," but not to stay in backward motion. Muslim Arab intellectuals opened up to Occidental ideas; they tried hard to adapt them and propagate them in the Orient. Others fought against imported models of female emancipation, with a sense that men inspire the ideal of women: deviation is not automatically synonymous with liberation.

In keeping with philosophical, political, and religious ideas, we can discern in different Muslim countries, and particularly in Egypt, the different attitudes facing these new cultural acquisitions, attitudes that indicate two main waves of thought.

Openness to Progress

The objective of the stream of modernization was to bring the Arab world from a traditional, underdeveloped era to the modern epoch. The three main positions established in this stream are:

(a) The Nationalist group based on the existence and the future of the nation, included women in issues of nationalism and culture.

(b) The Liberal group, based on individual liberty, freedom of thought, belief and speech.
(c) The socialist group, based on equality and collective justice.

For the modernization stream to give Islam momentum, Muslims needed to cultivate new sciences and reorganize religious teaching. Initiators of that stream seemed to welcome Occidental culture, advocating the discipline of thought that allowed progress, thinking actively in all forms of education, of women's liberation, and of the reform of legislation toward modernity.

Against an extremely secular model, Egyptian modernists appeared respectful of religion. Most of them maintained their Muslin faith above all and strived to continue their discoveries of the Qur'an. They focused their efforts on achieving a sense of national renovation, which began with the struggle for independence. This task required a radical questioning of morals and mentalities, which were justified then, but constitutes an obstacle today. To guarantee national independence, it was imperative to give each citizen all the possibilities to flourish and mobilize in all ways, each mind and pair of hands, in other words, including the participation of women in all economic, social, and even political tasks of national construction.

Qassim Amin (1865–1908), a prominent jurist and scholar influenced by the drive of modernization, approached the problem of social reform through the question of women's liberation. The Egyptian society that aspires to rediscover its identity, he said, cannot neglect objective necessities of progress that impose as a primordial condition the liberation of women.[1] His originality as a thinker consisted of the conciliation of the Islamic and modern movements. He accomplished his task by proposing a new way of interpreting the Qur'anic verses and ascribed the role of women to customs, which are subject to reform and change.

He poses the problem of women in many arenas. On veiling, he believed that its practice is evidence or an acknowledgment from men that women's will is stronger than that of men. Afraid of seeing women out of their control, they decided to hide them and make them slaves of this social tradition. Qassim Amin attempted to incorporate women in society and liberate them from the veil, which he argued prohibited them from exercising their general, natural, and necessary functions.

From a religious perspective, change is a consequence of *ijtihad,* or a personal process of reasoning to research and understand the scriptures. The Qur'an, a book that, among other things, examines social relations, constitutes an unbreakable ensemble of the affirmation of faith and sociopolitical rules of life. The Qur'an is not a closed code of laws. The work of illumination

or *tafsir* is traditionally attributed to the '*ulama* or "people who bind and unbind." For Qassim Amin, culture is the sociohistorical application of Qur'anic teaching. Ancient traditions turned out to be overvalued: instead of remaining elements of adaptation to the environment, they became elements of autoconservation and even of rupture. Traditions intensified, but in a sense broke away from the Qur'anic spirit.

These are the conclusions of the first Arab "feminist" that I found justifiable in 1982 when I first researched the subject. As we will see in the next chapter, Amin's critics accused him of conniving with the British and even accused him of ties with Lord Cromer, the British governor of Egypt during the colonial era, on matters related to the liberation of Egyptian women.

The Reaction of a "Pure and Hard" Islam

The Islamist group referred also to the Arab Muslim heritage; however, this time, the interpretation has a fundamentalist sense. Proponents of this movement wanted to save their countries where underdevelopment is incontestably pervasive. However, the cause, in their eyes, is not the Muslim tradition; instead, it is the infidelity of Muslims to their own religion and traditions. Thus, the only way to avoid underdevelopment would be a return to the sources of Islam in order to rediscover their initial nature, their authentic personality, and their previous civilization that once allowed them to be the world's leader during the Golden Age of Islam. Then, women themselves would never be free to imitate the Occidental model, but they would keep their subordinate role toward men, who are and have always been the only masters in their home.

Today, the Orient suffers from a profound identity crisis. However, this search for identity confounded with Islam is perceived more as a factor to protect the society than a search for religious value. The Arab world wants to conserve its dignity first. But this fundamental requirement can be translated to two opposing tendencies: on the one hand, the "adult" generations admit that the idea of the liberation of women, although discretely, is permissible, but often remain prisoner to the social taboo, aware of the complexity of the endeavor, not allowing it to change their world. On the other hand, the "Islamic Revolution" reaches out, especially youth people who are going back to a more traditional mode and to a "pure and hard Islam," in reaction to the image of a corrupted Occident unable to protect its individuals.

The place of women remains fundamental in the dilemma of the modern Arab world. Yet if we insist on this very important "mutation," it is precisely because it is at the center of a discussion of social values of Islam.

Women in Tradition and the Discourse of the Veil

The history of the veil, also called *hijab,* indicates an array of symbolism, as it exists and pervades through different civilizations. Each civilization weighs the *hijab* with various levels of significance, through social, religions, and even traditional symbolism. The *hijab* even possesses a different meaning within the same civilization, but at different points in history. Sometimes, it symbolizes the upper refined social class; it is limited to the wives and daughters of nobles and wealthy members of a given society. In other instances, it symbolizes the suffering of humanity, or the poor and the oppressed. Moreover, some cultures may view it as a protection of women from the eyes of the environment. Since the woman represents the virtues and values of a culture and society, the *hijab* becomes a protection for the entire society. Considering the array of meanings related to its wearing, the *hijab* confers upon itself more than one definition, each linked to a particular civilization, society, and time.

In Lebanon, the resurgence of the veil manifests itself mainly in the Shi'i community. The multiconfessional system and religious and political pressure led to the revival of Islamic Shi'i traditions as well as Sunni—*usuliyya*—inflexible conservatism. Religious authorities from Saudi Arabia as well as Iran are spending millions of dollars toward the revitalization of their own religious communities in Lebanon. Sunni and Shi'i communities seem to be competing in Lebanon, and the influence of religion is obvious, measured by the number of mosques built in the last decade, and by the reinforcement of the veil upon Muslim women, in particular Shi'i women, a previously abandoned custom. Women in each Muslim community wear the *hijab* in a particular way. By looking at a veiled women, one can easily differentiate and recognize their religious affiliation, whether Sunni by covering the hair, or Shi'i by covering the hair low to the forehead and under the chin. After a long absence, an expatriate Lebanese who visits Lebanon wonders what the increased number of veiled women represents. Is it a way to present an Islamic image of Lebanon, to reposition women in religion and in a political Islamic identity, a way for Muslim women to enter, free or oppressed, the public and political space, or to marginalize the Christian communities?

Studies argue persuasively that the recent phenomenon of *hijab* is rather modern, not a traditional phenomenon, a result of recent geopolitical and cultural exchanges that exist on a global scale. It is a product and a reaction to Westernization. Since Islam is historically decentralized, each Muslim community attempts to establish group identification. In Lebanon, a country built on the coexistence of different religious communities, *communitarianism* came to represent the priority of the group over national identity in the

lives of individuals. The veil, which has come to symbolize larger issues for different groups, burdens the intellectual discourse of the veil.

For many years, the question of what it means to be a woman and a veiled woman and what the veil ultimately represents has been the subject of heated debate. On one side, some Islamist thinkers and activists envision the resurgence of the veil as a symbol of faith, of ethical values and even of grassroots democracy. It is also characterized as the unintended consequence of modernization and the conflict between opposing forces favoring and against globalization. Either way, they stress the powerful impact that the resurgence has had on the lives of both urban and rural women on a local, regional, and global level. On the other side, many secular and modern scholars see the veil as a reversal of all that they consider gains for women's status. They feel helpless against the growth and popularity of Islamist movements. Many hoped, in their efforts of accommodation, to prove that a progressive view is in fact the essence of Arabic Islamic thought; they see the Islamist resurgence as a rejection of that view, and the veil as a symbol of that rejection.

In Egypt, for example, the policies Muhammad 'Ali accelerated social changes through the modernization of the army, increased revenues, and education reforms, and attempted to establish industry, and these policies greatly affected the status of women. The state's pursuit of educational modernization and the debate over the expansion of education and new professional opportunities for women added to the necessity of social reform for women.

Reformers drew attention to the importance of looking at how some classical jurists interpreted the *hadith* and used the Qur'an to their advantage to subjugate women. In the late eighteenth century, an undercurrent in the attitude toward women began to gain momentum. Scholars such as Rif'at el-Tahtawi, Mohammad 'Abduh, and Qassim Amin recommended that reforms be put in place to change Islamic culture's treatment of women. The Islamic word at this time was experiencing many changes due to the economic conquest of Western Europe, allowing the influx of new ideas. Regardless of these changes, the recommendations incited passionate debates concerning the reform of laws pertaining to women.[2] Tahtawi (1801–1871), an Al-Azhar graduate, went on a cultural mission to Paris from 1826 to 1831, and upon his return to Egypt he wrote *Talkhiss bariz,* in which he eulogized the status of European women, their education, their behavior, and their participation in the advancement of society. He advocated that education should be equal for boys and girls and recommended that public education for women be identical to that which men experienced.[3] The confusion concerning women's *hichme*, or decency, does not come from her being veiled or unveiled, he stated, but from her education. He valued European's women occupations and contributions to their respective countries in many fields such as

education, commerce, or even as blue-collar workers. With much respect, he describes the participation of women in social life. He notes that European women produced important work: some were translators with elegance and style and others set models in their writings and expressive correspondences. Consequently, the fact that a man's beauty resides in his reason whereas a woman's beauty resides in her words is commonly accepted in Europe and thus cannot be applied to Egyptian men and women.[4] Tahtawi, a member of the committee for the reorganization of education, recommended universal education for girls and women in his book *Al-murchid al-amin lita'leem albanat wal banin* and provided an analysis of the benefit of education to the entire society. "Together, we need to elevate boys and girls to teach them how to interact. Women need to read and write to be cultured and to be able to intermingle with men . . . Education will shelter women from idleness . . . work protects women and more likely to guide her to virtue."[5]

His work was the first work in Arabic that advocated reforms in the social arena that affected women and proposed technological reforms for national renewal. No steps in this direction were taken until 1832 when a medical school for female *hakimas* (doctors) in Egypt subsidized by the state opened up due to several epidemics, and a need arose for women who could treat other women. Women were able to give vaccinations, deliver babies, and perform examinations as state employees. The active presence of these *hakimas* broadened the value of education for girls and proved their ability to compete with men. Women employed by the government were encouraged to marry men in the medical schools.

After Tahtawi, the Christian Lebanese Fares al-Shidyaq wrote *al Saq* in 1855. He argued that the education of women was essential to the country, and that a woman who occupied her time by educating herself, by reading and learning, prevented idleness and the invention of ruses. As Tahtawi had done, Shidyaq wrote in another book *Kachf al makhba' 'an founoun Europa* in which he observed the situation of women in France and Great Britain. He then compared French and British women to Egyptian women and analyzed the attitude of the European men toward women in general. European men respected the participation of their wives in society.

Abd el-Rahman Kawakibi, a Syrian author and pan-Islamic Arab solidarity supporter, talked about the role of women in education and in society in general. Known as the initiator of freedom, he called for women to liberate themselves from ignorance. In his book *Um al-qura* he noted that "the essential cause of the backwardness of our country is the situation of our women who remain ignorant; on the contrary, in our history, our ancestors took half of their education from their wives, such as Aisha, who gave us half of the prophet's teachings."[6]

The issue took another turn following the development of anthropological and biological research in the nineteenth century proving that mental capacities of women and men are equal. Butrus al-Bustani, a Christian Lebanese, notes that in this sense, a human being, male or female, possesses the same capacity to reason. The difference between sexes cannot provoke a difference in the capacity of reasoning, and some women are even able to surpass men through their intellectual prowess.[7] Boustani frequently repeated in his speeches and writings that education is the light that shines into people's minds, chasing away the shadow of ignorance, the source of so many evils still afflicting us today.

In 1873, Egypt established the first government-run school for girls, but the education of girls ultimately slowed down in 1882 following the British occupation. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, an Islamic ideologist and political activist, began emphasizing the importance of education as a means of upward mobility and a way for citizens to obtain teaching positions as well as positions in the administration. Britain did nothing to meet the growing demand for the education of the Egyptian people. Instead, Lord Cromer increased tuition according to the increased demand for schools. Private, missionary, and foreign schools popped up to meet the growing demand. Mohammad ʿAbduh founded Muslim benevolent societies for girls and boys, which attracted more students than the government schools did.

Consequently, upper-class women began to step away from traditional customs and began to experiment with Western styles of clothing. Those traveling to Europe become accustomed to being unveiled, while staying veiled in lighter, more transparent veils at home. Many critics demonstrated anxiety over such changes, wondering where it would lead the society.

One of the most influential thinkers who campaigned for reforms in harmony with Islam in general and education reforms for women in particular was the Egyptian Muhammad ʿAbduh, who had an extensive following and was a student of Al-Afghani. ʿAbduh was a committed religious thinker who argued for the acquisition of "modern sciences" to promote widespread education.

Mohammad ʿAbduh, an Egyptian Mufti, jurist and liberal scholar, described a tension between two irreconcilable facts: Islam expressing God's will about how men should live and act in society and the irreversible modernization and movement of civilizations compelling men to live in certain ways. ʿAbduh's purpose was to prove in detail the compatibility between these two facts, using the principles of Islamic social morality. For ʿAbduh, these principles helped to limit and control the modern world, for "true civilization is in conformity with Islam. The laws of social progress and happiness were discovered by Europe, but they are the laws of Islam. Thus, Islam can be dissolved

into modern thought."[8] The question remains, why did this perfect society in the end decay? He reports five reasons. First, that extreme Shi'is brought in the spirit of excess, and a certain type of mysticism obscured the essential nature of Islam; second, the difference between what was essential and what was not, the excess of adherence to the outwardness of the law and from it the blind *taqlid*, or imitation. Third, for 'Abduh the spread of *taqlid* was connected to the rise of the Turkish power in the *umma* . . . Fourth, when the '*ulama* were corrupted, everything in Islam began to decay; the Arabic language lost its purity, unity was broken, education was perverted and even doctrine was corrupted when the balance between reason and revelation was overturned and the rational sciences neglected. Finally, when the Islamic nations were losing their virtues and thus their strength, the nations of Europe were becoming stronger and more civilized.[9]

As a leading modernizing politician and reformer, he advocated the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and intellect of the modern West in order to promote national and Islamic renaissance. He was in favor of the reform of marriage practices and for the elevation of the status of women. He stressed the importance of addressing the misinterpretations of Islam that accumulated over the centuries. He was the first to state that Islam first recognized the full and equal humanity of women, a concept still argued by Muslim feminists today. He argued that the West was not the first to realize this, as Europeans claimed, and that polygamy and divorce were not compatible with the essential teachings of Islam, monogamy was the Qur'anic ideal, and demanded society to return to a state of true Islam. In 1880, he published articles in *al-waqaeh al-missriyya* and *Al-Manar*.

Abduh's reforms met a substantial amount of opposition and criticism. Conservatives believed that he had made concessions in order to adopt modern thought that threatened the solvency of Islamic doctrine. He formulated a *Fatwa* on questions of public concern. He identified certain traditional concepts of Islamic thought in line with the ideas of now dominant Europe. In this line of thought, *maslaha, or* public interest, gradually turned into utility, *shura, or* consultation into parliamentary democracy, *ijma'*, or general acceptance conferring on precepts of laws into public opinion; Islam itself becomes identical with civilization and activity, the norms of nineteenth-century social thoughts. To some extent, the claims of his critics were legitimate, because despite the fact that 'Abduh advocated a return to pure Islam, his actions unintentionally engendered the advancement of secularism. He successfully fostered the modernization of Arabic thought through the adherence to *ijtihad,* meaning individual judgment based on case law or past precedent and his belief that the Qur'an should be understood as a tool for human reasoning and not solely as the word of God. Also, he effectively broke

down cultural barriers, allowing Muslims to receive aid from non-Muslims so long as this benefited the overall *umma*. 'Abduh's struggle demonstrated how difficult the process of modernization was for the Islamic world, but shows that, in the end, it was possible.

Thus, without intending it, 'Abduh was perhaps opening the door to the overflowing of Islamic doctrine and law by inviting all the innovations of the modern world. He had intended to build a wall against secularism; he had in fact provided an easy bridge by which it could capture one position after another. It was not an accident that one group of his disciples were later to carry his doctrines in the direction of complete secularism. Moreover, his thought carried out a nationalist element "Non-Muslims belonged to the nation in exactly the same sense as Muslims, and there should be good relations between those who differed in religion . . . Muslims should accept help from non-Muslim in matters of general welfare."[10]

Qassim Amin: The Veil as a Western Creation

In 1899, Qassim Amin published his book titled *Tahrir al-Mar'a*—the liberation of women—which marked the beginning of feminism in Arab culture. Indeed, Qassim Amin brought attention to the debate and sparked discussions in Middle Eastern and Western countries. Thus, understanding his arguments for the increase of women's rights and the arguments of his critics are imperative in understanding this underlying debate and the struggle for and against modernization of Muslim women that continues today.

The publication of Qassim Amin's *Tahrir Al-Mar'a*—The Liberation of Women—sparked an intense debate. Amin advocated primary-school education for women and reform laws on polygamy and divorce. The reforms he promoted were not that radical for the 1890s, so why the strong response? Already the recommendations that Tahtawi and Mohammad 'Abdu made in 1870 and 1880 incited a passionate debate. By 1890s women's education had already begun, state and benevolent religious schools had established primary-schools education for girls? He championed fundamental social reforms for Egypt, and called for the change of customs, in particular unveiling. Severely critiquing Amin, Leila Ahmed wonders why did he consider the veil a symbolic reform, a key element to bring about a general cultural and social transformation. Qassim Amin, a lawyer, French educated from the upper middle class, prone to Occidental changes in society, declared that Egyptians must abolish the veil, change customs and the dress of women, therefore marking the definition of feminism in Arab culture. The changes he advocated reflected a shift in attitude toward Arabic culture. Considered the first battle of the veil, it agitated the Arab press, because it marked a new discourse

in which the veil began to represent larger issues. Issues of class and culture reflecting the Colonizer and the colonized became a conflict, directly caused by the British occupation of Egypt in 1882.[11]

The political encroachment arose, which accused the British of using Egypt as a supplier of raw materials and of bringing about agricultural reforms enacted to increase productivity, which resulted in increased prosperity and benefits for some, but created worse conditions for others. It benefited European residents, the Egyptian upper class, and the new middle class of rural notables and the Western-educated Egyptians, the new intellectual elite. Thus, "modern" men displaced religiously trained *'ulama* in positions of power, traditional knowledge became seen as backward, and legal reforms did not affect the position of women. The established Mixed Courts with new codes based mostly on French law bypassed *shari'a* law, the Hanafi legal opinion of Egypt. Artisans and merchants were unable to compete with Western products. Rural workers went to urban areas, forming a growing middle class of men. British administration increased education fees, which created greater class divisions. Unfair economic and legal privileges for Europeans sparked anti-Western sentiments. Capitulations exempted Europeans from Egyptian law and from paying taxes. The conflicting class interests were the facade of political ideological divisions.

The conflict of those eager to adopt Western ways versus those who want to preserve Islamic ways appeared in the press. The Lebanese Christian in Egypt founded the pro-British daily *Al-muqattam* promoting Western ways whereas *Al-mu'ayyad* opposed Western encroachment. Also, Mustapha Kamil, the leader of the National Party, opposed Western ways as a secular rather than an Islamic nationalist. The National Party published *Al-Liwa* and believed that advancement for Egypt should begin with the expulsion of the British. Muhammad 'Abduh, leader of the 'Umma Party, advocated the acquisition of Western technology and knowledge, while calling for a revitalization and reformation of Islamic traditions. His goal was the modification of Western institutions for an Egyptian context, while gradually bringing Egypt independence from Great Britain. Muslim men were increasingly exposed to Western ideas, and the discourse of the veil became as a Western creation. The Islamic practices for women were embedded in the Western view of "otherness and inferiority." Travelers and crusaders were the source from which Western ideas about Islam formed. By the eighteenth century, Western narratives of women in Islam misconstrued the meaning of customs and viewed them as symbols of male dominance.

Westerners called for a reforming of native culture, especially with regard to women. The West believed that religion defined many of the customs in Arab society toward women. As a result, many missionaries boasted

Christianity's progressive nature toward women and many Europeans feminists urged Muslim women to unveil. Therefore, in Leila Ahmed's writing, Qassim Amin in *Tahrir Al-Mar'a* made assumptions and declared the inherent superiority of Western ways.

General contempt for Muslims throughout Amin's text praised European civilization and called pre-Colonial Egyptian rulers corrupt and unjust, which upset Egyptian nationalists. Amin characterized the *'ulama* as ignorant, greedy and lazy, and mocked their faith.[12] Ironically, most vicious attacks in the text are toward Egyptian women, characterized as unclean, ignorant, unattractive, unskilled, lewd, and gossiping. "The best man to her is he who plays with her all day and night . . . and who has money . . . and buys her clothes and nice things."[13] He adds that Muslim marriage is not based on love but on ignorance and sensuality.

This ideology supported by missionaries undermined the whole culture and according to Leila Ahmad, a rumor existed that the book was written at Cromer's urgings. Lord Cromer did not demand equality in education even in his own country, but wanted women to have primary-school education. How can he be a feminist with this statement? He believed that women needed some education to fulfill duties as wives, and called for an end to segregation and to unveiling, arguing that the veil created a barrier against the advancement of society. Girls would forget what they learned in school if they were veiled and secluded, essentially calling for the Westernization of Muslim society. He represented the Arabic reiteration of colonial ideology. Therefore, he triggered the first major controversy in the Arabic press resulting in more than 30 books and articles responding to the text. Most of the articles were critical of Amin, primarily for his pro-British positions. Some argue that though future generations may wish to unveil, it was a current practice, and Amin's call to unveil was colonial. The substitution of an Islamic-style male dominance with Western-style male dominance is not a matter of "feminists" and "anti-feminists," though some reduce it to this simplification. Amin's book marks the beginning of the discourse on the veil as well as the emergence of an Arabic narrative in response to the colonial narrative. Thus, the veil came to symbolize the dignity and validity of native traditions: women must veil to resist Western domination. In addition, the Western discourse and colonial narrative based on misperceptions and political manipulations added a symbolism to the veil that did not exist previously. The colonial use of feminism in the East hindered feminist movements within Muslim societies because it was an adoption of Western culture, as Western economic domination of the Middle East.

The exposure to Western ideas and the dismantling of social institutions gave new opportunities for women, benefiting the upper and bourgeois class;

however, there are undeniable negative consequences to this exposure, as the issue become a matter of East versus West, rather than right versus wrong. By adding the political element, it has become harder to reform without facing dissent.

Considering the complexity of enculturation, Leila Ahmed points out that there is no important connection between issues of culture and women within the history of Western feminism. Colonial domination led to rhetoric of "innately" and "irreparably" misogynist practices of the native culture. The author adds that Western feminism is not immune from any endocentric legacy and misogyny, and most importantly it does not call for the abandonment of the entire Western heritage and the wholesale adoption of aspects of other cultures; rather, it "engages critically and constructively with that heritage in its own terms." Enculturation has a determinant result on the human psyche; since people recreate unconsciously in their own lives part of their previous enculturation, the substitution of one culture for another for an entire society cannot be realistic. In the Islamic world and the non-Western world, those who first proposed a status improvement of women were attempting to abandon their native culture in favor of another culture's beliefs, mainly European. The colonial domination of Europe in the Middle East made these ideas more pronounced, further encouraging the inclusion of women in issues of nationalism and culture. Ultimately, the issue of women forged its way into the context of political reform. In several instances, the veil became a signifier of the social meaning of gender within the broader issues of politics and culture.

The Egyptian Supreme Council of Culture organized a six-day conference[14] in Los Angeles, California, on October 23, 1999, hosting 150 scholars and writers from Arab countries and around the world to pay homage to the renaissance spirit of Muslim reformists a century ago. Panelists noted that Amin's thought remains relevant because his view of society can be used as a "subtext to recover our own and come to terms with the dilemmas and social muddles" that the Arab word is experiencing. One panelist commented that it was "as if time has not passed in the Arab world."[15] . . . Amin's convictions have not lost their credibility and applicability because of the historical relevance of his writing and his society to ours. Selective messages of his book *Tahrir* al-*Mar'a* are fitted to state today's feminism and planning; indeed, current women feminists and intellectuals while attempting to reflect on the nineteenth century examine their own history, struggles, and setbacks to assess future challenges. How did participants assess Amin's thoughts on the subject?

"The reaction to '*Tahir*' cannot be simply understood on the basis of Amin's espousal of Western ideas but rather on how his ideas were played

out in Egyptian society at different class levels and shaped by his role as a judge and a nationalist."[16] The panels agreed that in *Tahrir al-Mara'*, which received severe criticism in Egyptian newspapers, Amin focused on aristocratic Egyptian women, who are in great need of education, and maybe he felt uncomfortable with the way in which women of his circle dealt with Colonizers' women? He considered veiling and seclusion as barriers for Egyptian women, regardless of their social class; they need to develop the necessary skills to manage their lives successfully even if they were uneducated. Regardless of what social groups and political discourse it served, Amin's work was "truly the harbinger of new opportunities for Arab women across class, religion, ethnicity, and race."[17,18] It opened the way for women's voices and different methods of resisting male hegemony, and also for women's attempts to renegotiate gender structure. The panel that pursued Amin's accomplishment found that while calling for an improved patriarchy, he denounced the cultural backwardness of the harem, which colonialists condemned and attributed to Islam. They deemed that "*Tahrir*' was a political and ideological commentary about what colonized Egypt is not; namely, inferior and beyond cultural repair"[19] but attributed the practice of the veil to customs that existed before Islam. His call for a new gender discourse is pertinent since it proves that women are central to the national economy on social development just like in advanced European nations.

Moreover, this work is written by a male reformist to Muslim men, especially the aristocratic class, a social stratum undergoing changes through the influence of nationalist modernists. The fact that Amin was an aristocrat and a *qadi*, or judge, made his work more significant since he possessed the ability to interpret *shari'a* and reform Islamic policies of the highest form. He denounced the religious dignitaries and conservative political leaders who resisted any attempt to change the old social order. He ascribed the role of women to customs, which are subject to change and reform, and urged his fellow men to understand that certain traditions, which served the interests of their predecessors, have become incompatible with the 1900s. *Shari'a*, he proclaimed, is mutable and capable of accommodating new conditions without violating the fundamentals of Islam. Finally, Amin's work opened the way to a female literary print culture contributing to the awakening of lower-class women in Egypt. Higher-class women authored biographical dictionaries, novels, domestic literature, and translated work, whereas lower-class women, due to their distinct class conditions and personal experiences, had more modest demands, asking for an incremental limitation of male authority.

CHAPTER 7

Veiling and Divergent Feminist Voices

The construction of the private and the political spheres for Muslim Arab women is complex and different from that of the West; for Arab feminists, the "private is political."[1]

As per Abderrahim Lamchichi in *Femmes et Islam,* the universal importance of equality goes back to the golden age of Islam, yet the Islamic movement of today is a regression for women in the context of social rights, education, and employment. He stresses that this regression finds its base not from Islam as a religion, but from local traditions and repressive political regimes, because fundamentalists have manipulated the pillars of their religion in order to assert this control.[2]

Nevertheless, all feminists agree that women always foster reform in Islam.

Considering the historical development of the region, it is profusely clear that Islamic feminism is intrinsically linked to the issue of the veil, and we cannot discuss Islamic feminism without an explicit discussion of the significance of the veil. Feminism in Arab society began to develop vigorously in the twentieth century. This period marks an era when women came into the political arena, literary circles, and the workforce. With this increased visibility came two divergent voices of feminism, advocating two roles for women. The dominant voice of women in Egypt and the Middle East was that of an elite group of upper to upper middle class women such as Huda Sha'rawi. Raised bilingually with a French education, she showed interest in assimilating with the progressive lifestyle of the Western woman. The alternative voice wanted to find a way to have feminism within a "native, vernacular, Islamic discourse," validating native customs in order to resist Western domination. Malak Nassef, raised within the native Arabic culture, resisted the issue of unveiling, viewing it as a route toward evil because of the potential for man's actions toward women who remove the veil. She asked men to become "moral" and to treat women equally and respectfully. She stated, "It is

the man's fault . . . It is men's moral character that stands in need of improvement . . . Must be wary of men and not assume that all men who write about women are wise reformers."[3]

Huda Sha'rawi founded the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) aiming not only at educating and raising the intellectual and moral levels of women but also at reforming laws related to polygamy, divorce, and age difference between spouses. She kept strong connections with Western feminists, sending delegates to international conferences, and the organizational skills that developed as a result were able to help create and promote Arab feminism. She and a delegation of women formed by Saiza Nabawati and Nabawiyya Musa attended the International Women's Alliance conference in Rome in 1923.

Upon their return, in a "symbolic act of emancipation," they removed their veils and revealed their unveiled selves to the public and their radical actions brought on a more liberal attitude toward women. The act of unveiling was significant; it meant supporting gradual reforms toward the adoption of a Western cultural path and political secular institutions. Women expressed their freedom and became a dynamic force capable of participating in Egyptian political life, fighting and winning campaigns for suffrage. Women demanded equal education and a minimum marriage age for young girls. Moreover, women rallied for Egypt's independence. The Western affiliation they promoted was criticized and interpreted as "validation of the western ways as more advanced and more 'civilized' than native ways." In her analysis, Leila Ahmed claims that type of feminism "the colonization of consciousness . . . in short, would complicate feminism in the Muslim world." Upon Huda Sha'rawi's death in 1947, Ibtihaj Qaddus of Lebanon succeeded her as president of the EFU.

Another feminist, Zeinab al-Ghazali, continuing in the same vein as Nassef, sought to create a "path of female subjectivity and affirmation" within the terms of indigenous culture. As an Islamic feminist, she challenged patriarchal laws, ideas, and jurisprudence from within a grounded Islamic framework to reclaim identity and faith in an egalitarian context. She wrote vividly on the evils of polygamy, forced marriage, and marriage with too large of an age gap. Her political influence helped establish charities to help advance awareness on women's issues.

Two kinds of movements became visible, and the difference between the two feminist voices derived from a difference in identity perception and sense of self, as well as psychological and political views, which are still making their presence known today. One movement is accused, because of being imported from abroad, of representing a sect, which had different traditions than the locals, and thus not being accepted by the whole nation. The conflict between Western and Islamic narratives complicated the issue of veiling, which became

more significant as time progressed, revealing an issue of identity. The general tendency in the last few decades has been the return to something native, a national dress expressing loyalty to religion.

Similarly, in a video titled "Veiled Revolution: Changing lives of women in the Arab world," which mainly depicts how women are coping with the "religious, political, and economic upheavals now transforming the Middle East," Elizabeth Fernea speaks of two kinds of movements. One, imported from abroad, represents different traditions than others and is not accepted by the whole nation, perhaps because Westernization did not really bring the desired result expected in development.

For the last 50 years, women have dressed themselves in a Western style; the short skirt, the uncovered head, and this type of clothing distinguished them from traditional women who continue to wear long full dresses and headscarves. However, today middle-class women are covering themselves up again in the streets of Cairo and other Middle Eastern cities. It began in early 1970s with the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

Fernea interviewed middle-class women of two age groups, and recorded their responses. A young 25-year-old veiled women shared that she believed she was obeying the Qur'an by dressing modestly and covering her head. Another young working woman replied that now more than ever women must be careful of their reputation. New economic conditions obligate them to work outside the home in the company of strangers, particularly men. This new situation requires women to veil themselves in order to be more comfortable accomplishing tasks and to signal their moral attitude and their nonavailability for prowling men. The young girl went on to compare herself to an apple placed in front of a hungry man, a situation considered potentially sexually dangerous. Moreover, the traditional dress also protects women who use public transportation, which places them in constant physical contact with men. Traditional dress conveys the respectability of those who wear it. Yet another female university graduate speaks highly of this transformation, greatly admiring the strong-willed young women who are able to wear the traditional dress and to keep it up. Overall, these women believed that choice of dress was an individual preference, and that forcing a religion or certain type of dress on someone was wrong and "extremist."

Ironically, the granddaughters of the first feminists seem to be "retreating behind the veil again." Fernea interviewed the "old fighters" about their feelings on that retreat and its impact on women's rights and the change that has resulted. They replied, "Dangerous . . . Now in this era, every Muslim woman has to work diligently to face and overcome the challenges," and "It's not the veil that protects a woman, it's her interior, her strength of character. We saw the first women of Islam. To make us regress again, it's impossible!"

"*Ce n'est pas le voile qui protège la femme. C'est son intérieur, c'est son caractère . . . Nous voyons les premières femmes de l'Islam. Nous faire revenir en arrière, c'est impossible!.*"

Is a dress so important in a nation's history? Perhaps when used as a symbol of revolution, as seen in Lebanon with Hizbullah's agenda for women. Today, one wonders whether the resurgence of the veil is a way that women, free or oppressed, found to enter the public and political domain.

During my field research in Lebanon in the summer of 2007, I interviewed a young 25-year-old woman wearing the headscarf named Nura. She was sitting next to me at the Jesuit University library. She was an MA student majoring in Arabic literature at St. Joseph University, researching for her thesis on the feminist Christian writer Emily Nasrallah. Her answers on the issue of the veil indicate more similarities than differences when compared to the Muslim Egyptian women interviewed by Elizabeth Fernea 20 years ago. I asked her the following questions: Why are you wearing the veil? What does it mean to you to be veiled? Would you one day ask your daughter to wear it? How do you participate in the evolution of your country? In addition, did Christian schools contribute to the education of Muslim girls?

She responded, "I am a teacher in a public Muslim school," which astonished me because as far as I know public schools do not have any affiliation and are open to all Lebanese people regardless of the confession to which they belong. Private schools are the only ones that indicate their religious affiliation. She went on to say that she used to go to social gatherings wearing short sleeves, and that was acceptable. Her husband convinced her to wear the veil two years ago right before their marriage, at which point she adopted the veil and she is proud of her decision, after all, it is a religious requirement, and "in no way do I intend to remove it in my lifetime." She explained that some women are successful at keeping it on whereas for others it creates psychological problems, especially if they are forced to wear it. She mentioned an Egyptian actress who decided to wear the veil but found she was not being offered roles because of her choice, so she removed it. "If you work in a Christian company," she continued, "they will not accept the veil, so work opportunities for veiled women are very limited. This discrimination against veiled women is wrong."

> In the event that God gives us a daughter, we will recommend to her that she wears the veil because God has asked us to do so. Once a woman decides to wear the veil, she cannot go back on her decision because it goes against the religion. The veil is a symbol of Islam and not an indication of anti-western sentiments. We wear it for God only.I participate in the evolution of my country through my education and work at the school; I am a productive

> member of society and the veil has nothing to do with it. Christian schools have contributed to educating Muslim girls in the past; they have the merit and deserve all the credit for it. Now Hizbullah has its own social programs for girls and women; every confession in Lebanon has its own religious schools, and they all accept students from other confessions. In the end, whether Sunni and Shi'i, we are all Muslims; there are no essential differences between us. What matters is that we say, "we are Muslim"; we all have one religion.

For Nura, the veil does not interfere or prevent her from accomplishing her daily tasks and her contribution to the evolution of Lebanon. She directs concern at Christian companies that discriminate against veiled women, thus limiting their work opportunities.

I belong to a generation that grew up in Lebanon during a time in which Christians and Muslims did not feel the need to claim identity or faith through religious symbols. Though Nura explains that the veil is only a religious requirement, I believe that her veiling in this particular era and particular regional context is in alignment with spatial requirements transcending the Lebanese territorial reality. The National Pact that defined the Lebanese entity on its independence day in 1948 does not mention religious requirements but specifies in its preamble "the abolition of political confessionalism shall be a basic national goal and shall be achieved according to a gradual plan." Before that, in Lebanon in the 1940s, associations of women participated in demonstrations to face the military of the French mandate, who had imprisoned the leaders of the Independence movement. These women included Ibtihaj Kaddoura, Najla Saab, Hélène Rihan, Laure Tabet, and Souraya Adra, who was the first president of the League for Women. The League participated in the fight for independence, inspired by the belief that creating an association of "atypical," nonconfessional women would contribute not only to the universal rights of women, but also to the protection of the independence movement, which needed the help of all citizens, men and women. It is thus in 1953, the League of Lebanese Women's rights was born.[4] One could say that as in other Arab countries, veiling has appeared in Lebanon among university students as a political, economical, and maybe protective measure, and has persisted after the emergence of Hizbullah as a religious and political party.

Woman in the Qur'an and Hadith: Ambivalence

The woman's status remains ambiguous in Islam: she is a dangerous being that must be dominated, but at the same time a desirable being that must be respected; the image of the woman initially appears to be ambivalent.

Furthermore, the Qur'an is always venerated, but in practice, customs will not always bear relation to the sacred texts, and there will be as many statuses and roles for women as there are social classes or groups in different historical Muslim societies.

In the first place, a woman's situation varies according to the social class to which she belongs: certain middle-class Muslim women have as much liberty as their fellow Christian Arab women and spend their time traveling throughout the world, while women of modest conditions maintain a subordinated status. Conflicting class interests underlay political and ideological divisions such as between those eager to adopt Western ways versus those who want to adopt Islamic or Islamist ways.

Images of women also contrast depending on whether they live in the country or in the city. The rural woman, still uncultivated and rough, plays an important role in a community where she is free to go where she pleases, working in the fields, helping the men weed, plough, or harvest. Here, the women have a certain moral authority that Arab civilization has never accorded them. On the contrary, the city dweller, the recently urbanized woman, remains shut away and alienated: this is a consequence of colonialism—Ottoman followed by European—during which men closed their houses to forbid foreigners from penetrating the intimacy of the home. This screen will more or less stop acculturation attempts in the world of Muslim women.

To be a woman in the Middle East is quite different than in the West, and the veil has come to symbolize a cultural otherness following the assumptions and "Orientalist" construct of the past. The fact is also complicated because Arab culture is torn between religious tradition, modernization, and now globalization.

Different Meanings of *Hijab* over Time: Semantic, Cultural, and Historical Shift

The current debate of the veil is not a modern phenomenon. As mentioned before, in order to understand the full concept, we have to consider this practice in its historical context. From a simple method of proper conduct in its original context for the Prophet's wives as well as a status symbol, the *hijab*'s meaning has changed. Numerous scholars traced the evolving meaning of the veil through its legal history. They argued that as Islam expanded into new territories, the Islamic community needed a normative set of laws to guide gender relations into the newly conquered countries. The emphasis was and remains on the utmost model of righteous behavior shown by the Prophet and his family. Early theologians began debating the meaning

of the Qur'anic verses, interpreting them as to find the best meaning of the word *hijab* as a garment that women ought to wear. In the eighth century, the classic legal interpretation of the verses resulted in the '*Abassid* period in an absolute and strict dress code for women. Later scholars debated the extent to which women's bodies should be covered, whether the hair, face, arms, hands, and feet needed such extensive clothing. In the middle ages, Muslim women were expected to respect the code of lawful dress.

Taking the history into account, it becomes clear that Islamic feminism is deeply linked to an explicit discussion of the veil. All modernist feminist writers are compelled to talk about the history of the veil. Fadwa Al-Guindi in *Veil: Modesty, Privacy, and Resistance,* analyzing all related concepts in textual and social contexts to the word *hijab*, contended that the commonly used modesty-based code "modesty-shame-seclusion" represents an ethnocentric imposition on Arab Islamic culture. With regard to an analysis of their contextual cultural meanings, the roots of the terms and concepts in the Arabic language of *hishma* (h sh m) and *sutra* (s t r), and related variants *tahashshud* (h sh d) and *haya'* (h y y) more adequately define the cultural code of the veil as "sanctity-reserve-respect."[5] The notion of *haram* represents a key concept and the most important Arabic root in the Islamic vocabulary (h r m) meaning something prohibited by divine authority. Among terms derived from this root are the words *harim, hurma, maharam*. Therefore, *haram* becomes synonymous with what is not prescribed and sacred. A continuum lies between what is *haram* or forbidden and *halal* (permissible, lawful). *Harim* becomes "the part of the home in which women are both privileged and protected from encounters with non *maharam* men." *Hurma,* best translated to sanctity, in Arab Islamic culture means a respectable woman or wife as the center of the home and its sanctity. Men and women guard and respect this sanctity.[6] To corroborate this idea of "privacy," men in traditional circles until now will mumble *ya sittar*, "O Protector of Privacy," an attribute of God, to announce their entry into their own homes, but especially those in which they are guests.

Barbara Stowasser in *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* maintains that modern interpretations of Islam accord dignity, honor, and rights, both spiritual and material, to women in Islam in contrast with the women's status in the Arabian *Jahilliyya*, and also in contrast with past and present societies, especially the West. Modernists in Islam focus their criticism on the premodern legal inequalities and the ongoing exploitation of the Western women in the workplace and as a sexual object, particularly in the entertainment and advertising industries. Women's rights in Islam verify the collective dignity of all Muslims, indeed of the entire Islamic system that the West and Orientalists had set out to defame.[7] What is new is their

attempt to explore the relationship of "Muhammad the man" to "Muhammad the Prophet" in doctrinal and psychological terms. They acknowledge that the Prophet's wives' status was elevated to a level of prestige above other females and as a model for emulation. They saw the wives' behavior as criteria of what was "lawful or forbidden" for Muslim women. The criteria were codified in the writing of early Islamic jurisprudence. In the *hadith*, the Prophet's wives are portrayed both as exemplars of their sex with regard to righteousness and virtue and as embodiments of female emotionalism, irrationality, greed, and rebelliousness. This provided both a paradigm for the limits that needed to be placed on women's roles in religion and society and a justification for them.

Therefore, the Qur'anic revelations of restriction directed at the Prophet's wives became applicable to all Muslim women, while the human frailties of Muhammad's wives were symbolic for all that was wrong with the female sex. They declared that the Prophet's actions were tacitly inspired, beyond human questioning, a source of the divine will, complementary to the Qur'an, and therefore an infallible "source," or "root," of the law. This adoption of the Prophet as the authority of the law allowed the portrayal of the Prophet's wives to be extended to all Muslim women. The Qur'anic revelation established the elite status of the Prophet's wives and became a reality during their lifetimes. It became a legal paradigm when Muslim scholarly consensus created the Prophet's consorts as models for emulation (sources of *sunna*). During the eighth and ninth centuries, during the time of Islamic conquest, indigenous patriarchal structures strengthened as an urban middle class of Muslims emerged. Therefore, virtues exalted from the Mother of the Believers sanctified the memory of outstanding women and a cultural model for Muslim female morality formulated by the medieval urbanized and acculturated Islamic scholars. Major components of this paradigm include segregation and quiet domesticity, modest comportment, seen as invisibility through veiling, ascetic frugality, and devout obedience to God and His Prophet, as well as wifely obedience.[8]

Given the importance of the exegetic significance, only a few verses in the Qur'an address the notion of the veiling of women in public and women's seclusion in the home. In verse (33:59) the issue of veiling is addressed, "O Prophet, tell your wives, your daughters and women believe to wrap their outer garments closely around them, for this makes it more likely they will be recognized and not be harassed. God is All-Forgiving, Compassionate to each."[9] This time, the Qur'an elucidates that the Prophet's wives should cover themselves with their cloaks while in public so as not to be mistaken for slaves and to be potentially harassed in the streets. Thus, veiling offers an indicator of status and a degree of protection for women.

Another Qur'anic verse that address the issue of veiling is verse 33:53: "O believers, do not enter the chambers of the Prophet for a meal unless given leave, and do not wait around for it to be well cooked. Rather, if invited enter, and when fed disperse, not lingering for conversation. This behavior irritates the Prophet, who is embarrassed to tell you, but God is not embarrassed by the truth. In addition, if you ask his wives for a favor, do so from behind the screen; this is more chaste for both your hearts and theirs. You must not offend the Prophet, nor must you ever marry his wives after him, for such would be a mighty sin in the sight of God. Whether you reveal a thing or whether you conceal it, God has perfect knowledge of all things."[10] It is clear that the Qur'an states these directions to avoid speaking to the Prophet's wives directly, but rather indicates that it is more proper to speak to them behind the screen meaning "*hijab*." In this context, the *hijab* is a fixture within the home providing privacy for the wives. In this sense, seclusion was a privilege, reflecting the special status of Muhammad's wives.

Moreover, Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan feminist sociologist, refutes the old conservative focus on women's segregation, which is a manipulation of the sacred text resulting in the institutionalization of male authoritarianism. Her own understanding of verse 33:53 is that the seclusion of the Prophet's wives from public life is a symbol of Islam's retreat from the early principle of gender equality, as is the "mantel" (*hijab*) verse 33:59, which abandons the belief of social responsibility, and the individual sovereign will of men's uncontrollable desires. Specifying *Asbab a-nuzul* (cause of the revelation) given by al-Tabari, collector of *hadith* or the Prophet's traditions, of the verse 33:53, the *hijab*, meaning curtain, was descended to place a barrier between two men, the Prophet and Anas, and not between a man and a woman.[11] Right after the Prophet's wedding with Zaynab, the Prophet socialized with all of their guests, but a small group of tactless guests overstayed their welcome and the Prophet was impatient to be alone with his new bride. "The Prophet had wed Zaynab Bint Jahsh. It was my responsibility to invite people to the wedding supper. I carried out this charge. Many people came. They arrived in groups, one after the other. They ate and then they departed . . . Zaynab was seated in a corner of the room. She was a woman of great beauty. All the guests departed except for three who seemed oblivious of their surroundings . . . He came back to the nuptial chamber. He put one foot in the room and kept the other outside. It was in this position that he felt a stir [curtain] between himself and Anas, and the verse of *hijab* descended at that moment."[12]

Mernissi commenting on this version of the classical al-Tabari *hadith* says that the two concepts merged—*hijab* and *sitr*. However, this lacks authenticity. Discrediting this particular textual item as inauthentic, arguing that the Prophet had the reputation of a *hakim* (wise man), a calm arbiter in

cases of conflict, "How can we explain such a minor irritation so rapidly precipitated a draconian decision like that of the *hijab*, which split Muslim space in two?[13] How far are we from Muhammad's early vision of gender egalitarianism?"

Dialectical Engagement with God: Authoritarianism and Intended Ambiguity in the Authoritative Texts of the Qur'an

Taking on the authoritarian issue, El-Fadl discusses the important question of the motivation behind the laws pertaining to and even "demeaning" women. There is an absence of a central authoritative entity in Islam, like the Church in Catholicism or a high authority figure like the Pope to convey God's will and to govern the legal structure of the vast religion. God has not revealed Himself and His nature, but rather his law, the *shari'a*. The roots of Islamic law are the Qur'an, a primary source with 6,000 verses perceived as a divine command. The second root is *sunna,* or the Prophet's customs as recorded in the *hadith* literature, collected and complied over several generations, and as some *hadiths* contradict others, *ijma'* or consensus of legal scholars and the community, is the third root of the law. Consensus involves the Islamic *Umma* settling upon certain issues of jurisprudence through discourse and constructive argument. This concept is the cornerstone of the existence of the '*ulama,* upholders of God's law. The disagreement on *ijma'* led to *qiyas* as fourth root of jurisprudence, *qiyas* being a "syllogistic reasoning" and application of logic to a situation not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an and *hadith*. The final recourse of Islamic Law and knowledge is "*ijtihad*," or the effort of legal reasoning by analogy and syllogism reasoning to understand the law revealed by God through the Prophet. When the four sources do not address a particular issue, one is to use his or her knowledge of the faith to try to reach a solution that in his mind or her would be acceptable in light of the religion as a whole. Therefore, Muslims as scholars or as individuals interpret the teachings of the Qur'an and *hadith* using common sense and their knowledge of the values that Islam seeks to instill in its followers. The ultimate goal of the law is justice *'adl* and *qist* equity as normative values.

While *Shari'a* is immutable, the understanding and implementation of *fiqh* is changeable and evolving and thus remains open to interpretations by all. Qur'an and *hadith* remain firm enough to leave no doubt as to what is forbidden and what is explicitly allowed. Islam holds people individually responsible for their own actions. Islamic law remains "vague" enough for followers to interpret its doctrines in many ways, allowing it to be the timeless manifestation of the will of God, and subject to a variety of interpretations in

accordance with time and place. This allows for a constantly evolving set of laws and guidance that is thoroughly adaptable to both location and period. The process of *ijtihad* involves a dialectal engagement with God since God speaks to human beings and human beings engage in God's speech through interpretation. This dialogue engages an abstract interpretation as well as action. The ambiguity exists because the Qur'an was intended to guide the whole world at all times.

However, Khaled El-Fadl questions the concept of authority as implemented in certain periods of Islamic history and argues that the authoritarian interpretive process has transformed assumptions into final and unchangeable truths and that Muslims have not struggled much with the ambiguity involved in the dialectical process. The purpose of ambiguity in the authoritative texts of Islam is of pivotal importance and it is part of the intended meaning. Ambiguity is purposeful in the processes and dynamics of Islamic law.

Though one *hadith* explicitly states, "my community will never agree upon an error," this inherent ambiguity opened up space for disagreement and discourse within the Islamic community. The disagreement and *ijma'* led to the founding of four Sunni schools of jurisprudence and other Shi'i schools of jurisprudence within Islam, all named after their respective founders. Al-Hanafi (699–767) was an Iraqi scholar of Persian extraction and his school of jurisprudence is the most influential for being the official school of the *'Abbasid* caliphs and the Ottoman sultans. Maliki, (713–795) was an Arab scholar of Yemeni descent and his school is dominant in Hijaz, Gulf, Sudan, Andalusia, and North Africa. Al-Shafi'i (767–820) devoted his career to standardizing the laws using Qur'an, *hadith,* and analogy. Hanbali (780–855), an uncompromising *hadith* collector and traditionalist, avoided *ijma'* and used reasoning by analogy only when Qur'an, *hadits,* and the legal ruling of his companions had been exhausted; this is the strictest school of law in Saudi Arabia. Ja'fari is the Shi'i school of legal codes named after the sixth Imam Ja'far who used *hadiths* of Ali and Imams. There are other Shi'i schools such as Isma'ili and Zaydi. Theoretically, all these schools work to provide a more religiously egalitarian society, but El-Fadl critiques the religious authoritarian hermeneutic in Islam, particularly the one that has spread widely after 1975 because the "hermeneutic methodology is highly subjective."

Scholars who took pride in the ethos of diversity and egalitarianism of Islam established themselves as orthodoxy in Islam, claiming the need for unity, *tawhid* within the system. They resisted change, specifically on issues and laws regarding women's duties and rights, closing the door to any *ijtihad* and subjecting them to an absolute authority. In the same vein, there were

cases "apostles" or "unbelievers" being banished if they were to disagree on that which the rigorist '*ulama* decreed. Indeed, misguided fundamentalism sidelined the practicality presented by the Qur'an, and gradually the process was abandoned by the practice of "*taqlid*," the blind adherence to the decisions of a religious authority without necessarily examining the scriptural basis or reasoning of that decision. Increasingly, a rigid system based on archaic laws and customs supplanted the evolving structure of Islamic law. Therein lay the reason for the clash of Islam and modernity as time has progressed according to El-Fadl's views. This shift in Islamic jurisprudential paradigm is apparent today in many parts of the Islamic world, where the laws of the *Shari'a*, misinterpreted and abused, exist in a manner completely unsuitable to present times.

This problem of resisting any change only worsened as the fear of Western influences grew. Anything different from their ideas was stigmatized as being tainted by Western influence. In the facade of egalitarianism, Muslim jurists gained a level of authority to set directives in stone under the facade of egalitarianism.

Authority is being implemented using two techniques that the author mentions: coercive authority and persuasive authority. Coercive authority allows a jurist to direct the conduct of a person by using threats, so that a reasonable person is compelled to follow. Persuasive authority allows the jurist the ability to guide the beliefs or conduct of a person through trust and explanation. In general, Muslims rely on jurists' supposed expertise to shape their views and understandings. El-Fadl prefers persuasive authority because an absolute authoritativeness involves an unqualified surrender of judgment to someone's perceived expertise. Persuasive arguments place authority on the jurist, but do not necessarily involve a complete surrender of one's judgment. Because human agency is unavoidable to understand Islamic scriptures, the negotiating process will inevitably be an intricate balance between coercion and persuasion.

The use of coercive authority has seen a significant rise through the past years, as many radical jurists—Normativist fundamentalist—have taken to apply force and coercion through threats and warnings of doom and failure to seek out their own agenda vis-à-vis radical Islamist terrorism.

Individual Responsibility and Accountability

Islam means complete surrender to God unless *shirk*[14] is involved. Unlike Christianity, there is no higher agent that exists between God and men who could absolve one's sins; all Muslims are accountable for their judgments and actions. The process of accepting authenticity engages every Muslim to

investigate diligently which of the jurists or jurisprudential schools to accept. Engaging in the search of the straight path is a sign of his total submission to Islam. The qualifications of the jurists is of utmost importance and the author suggests five "contingencies" to the authoritativeness of the special agents/jurists before trusting their advice: honesty, diligence, comprehensiveness, reasonableness, and self-restraint. "And God knows best" represents these contingencies well, and a Qur'anic verse reminds them "for you are nothing but a reminder, you do not control them." Therefore, if a person has doubt about a particular piece of advice given to him by a jurist, he should ask for scriptural evidence and reasoning supporting the ruling. A Muslim can also reject a ruling if another jurist offers contrary evidence; no jurist has a monopoly over the truth.

Clashes with Modernity

All modern feminist scholars are obligated to discuss at least one aspect of women's laws and its consequences on society. El-Fadl discusses the important question of motivation behind the laws pertaining to women. In a chapter entitled "Faith-Based Assumptions and Determinations Demeaning to Women," by means of a critical analysis of the authoritarian interpretative method, El-Fadl cites the Council for Scientific Research and Legal Opinions (CRLO), which was established in Saudi Arabia as the official institution entrusted with issuing Islamic legal opinions. Jurists represent all parts of the Islamic world. The Saudi government often adopts the legal opinion of the Council as the law of the land. He discusses traditions cited by the CRLO forbidding the mixing of the sexes, employment outside the home, prescription of the veiling of women, and other determinations stating that the spiritual status of a woman depends on the extent of her obedience to her husband. Since textual evidence, relating to nature, role, and fate of women is often conflicting and complex, El-Fadl believes the classical jurists followed legal determinations without understanding them.

Jurists cite the Qur'anic verse *Nisa*' 4:34: "Men are the maintainers *qawwamun* of women." The Arabic word *qawwamun* could mean "protectors," "maintainers," "guardians," or "servants" . . . that same word is used in the Qur'an in one other context, and this is when Muslims are commanded to be the *qawwamun* of justice. The word *qawwamun* is ambiguous and has different meanings under different contexts. Those adhering to the CRLO's ideals take it to mean that the husband has the right to command and discipline his wife. One could argue what if the woman is providing financial support; will she become the guardian? What if both of them provide financial revenue, will they become each other's guardian? El-Fadl goes on stating

that nowhere in the Qur'an is the word obedience, *ta'ah*, used to characterize a marital relationship. On the contrary, marriage is characterized as a relationship of companionship and compassion *mawwadah wa rahmam*, not a relationship between superior and inferior. The primary role of obedience does not come from the Qur'an but from a *hadith* attributed to the Prophet who reportedly said, "It is not lawful for anyone to prostrate to anyone. But if I would have ordered any person to prostrate to another, I would have commanded wives to prostrate to their husbands because of the enormity of the rights of husbands over their wives."[15] Different transmitters narrate this tradition in different forms.

Other versions include "By God, a woman cannot fulfill her obligations to God until she fulfills her obligations to her husband and if he asks for her [to have sex] while she is on a camel's back, she cannot deny him."[16] Regardless of what the metaphors mean, "the clear implication is that a wife owes her husband, by virtue of him being a husband, a heavy debt. In these traditions, the wife is a husband's humble servant."[17] These determinations contribute to the vilification of the moral status of women. "The scholars of *hadith* did not demand a higher standard of authenticity for a tradition that could have sweeping theological and social consequences."[18] Similarly, Ibn Khaldun quoted, "They did not engage in historical evaluation of traditions or examine their logical coherence or social impact."[19] These traditions lead to *wakhdh al-damir,* the unsettling or disturbing of the conscience; the least a Muslim could do is to pause to reflect about the place and implications of these traditions.

Qur'anic discourse did not play a primary role in the determination of the status of women, but the traditions attributed to the Prophet did. These traditions are inconsistent with the Qur'anic discourse on marriage. The Qur'an states in verse 30:21: "From God's sign is that God creates mates for you among yourselves so that you may find repose and tranquility with them, and God has created love and compassion between you." The Qur'anic verse 2:18 also describes spouses as garments for each other.[20]

The CRLO interpretation of the following *hadith* contradicts love and compassion and the description of spouses as garments for each other as prescribed in the previous verses 30:21 and 2:18 regarding marriage and spouse's relations. Versions of prostration and submission and traditions go back to the controversial figure of Abu Hurayrah who transmitted more *hadith* than companions in early Islamic history did, and Muslim scholars admit that his transmissions contradicted those of companions that are more notable. "The passage of a woman, donkey, and black dog in front of a man, invalidates his prayer."[21] The CRLO cites this to prevent women from praying in the

mosques. While maintaining Islam, which the CRLO represent, this *hadith* serves to honor and protect women. Another *hadith*, "A woman is like a rib. If you try to straighten her, you will break her. If you accept her the way she is, you'll enjoy her, but she'll remain crooked."[22] The CRLO cites this to rule that women require understanding and caretaking by men.

Further, *hadiths* say, "Women are the majority of inhabitants of Hell because they curse and they slander and are ungrateful to their companions and are deficient in religion and intellect. The testimony of a man is worth the testimony of two women."[23] The CRLO insists that there is nothing demeaning in this because it is just dealing with the natural inability of women to be equal to men. It uses the justification that women comprise the majority in Hell to prevent them from entering mosques and their emotional immaturity to prevent them from working, traveling alone, driving, or even attending mosques.

These traditions make the religious salvation of a woman solely contingent on her husband's pleasure. El-Fadl insists that these traditions require a conscientious pause, a conflict between the foundational principles used by the Qur'an and the traditions of subservience and obedience. The Qur'an talks of love, compassion, friendship, and virtuous women who are obedient to God—not to husbands. Classical and modern jurists argue that if there is a conflict between the sources, one must reconcile them—not use one source to trump the other. This is a well-established principle in Islamic jurisprudence. According to this logic, the CRLO reasoning requires the establishment of friendship and companionship, but through obedience. Nevertheless, one should ask the following methodological question: should traditions of divergent versions (*ahadih*), or of singular transmissions, which do not reach the highest level of authenticity, of suspect theological and profound social implications, be allowed to conflict with the Qur'an in the first place?

El-Fadl proposes that Islamic law must adopt a rationale of proportionality, which would require that only those traditions of the highest degree of authenticity be recognizable as a foundation in matters of crucial religious or social implications. One should take the stand of a faith-based objector and refuse to accept the precedent of traditions. On the basis of rational thought, the sections of the *hadith* that demean women must be carefully scrutinized because of the stubborn institutionalized patriarchy that is likely to play a predominant role in the authoritarian enterprise that was the origin for many traditions.[24]

After these Sunni topical discourses, we will now turn to the *new tafsir* of Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah. Ayatollah Khomeini designated

him as the *marja' al-taqlid*, source of tradition in 1978; he addressed the issues of women through his Shi'i doctrinal *ijtihad* and the political local and regional reality. His pioneering stand on woman made him a modernizer of Islam. He provided authoritative advice and *fatwas* for questions addressed but not answered by the Qur'an or tradition. The modernity he advocated is embedded in the principles of Islam, which challenges the universality of the conceptual theories to Western modernity, and by the same token, demonstrates that progress could take a different path.

CHAPTER 8

Personal Status Laws in Islam: Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah's New *Tafsir* (Exegesis)

Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah was born in Najaf, Iraq, to a prominent religious family descendant of Imam Hassan. In Najaf, he associated with Shi'i clerics, and particularly with Baqir al-Sadr who was politically active turning the Shi'i University at Najaf into a center of political and religious opposition to the Iraqi regime. In 1966, following the repression of Iran's *'ulama* by the Iraqi secular regime, he left Najaf to establish himself in Beirut. He focused on creating a sense of Shi'i communal identity, and formed an alliance of mutual need with Iran's emissaries to Lebanon who provided him with financial support and revolutionary symbols to bring in the Revolution to Lebanon. He began a successful career as a preacher, teacher, writer, and social worker, and placed himself in the experience of the have-nots that later defined his philosophy. He founded the "Brotherhood," an Islamic club for the poor residents of *Nab'ah, a* Beirut suburb, and promoted grassroots leadership through vigorous education, counseling, and outspoken sermons calling for an Islamic government to solve Lebanon's social and economic problems as well as helping Palestinians in their struggle against Israel.

While using Western techniques and persuasive arguments in his criticism of the West, he vividly criticized Western involvement in Lebanon. His mastery of the Arabic language enabled him to communicate Islamic theology in a simple, clear and concise, and, at times, fundamental way, using prose as well as poetry. For example, harking on the Marxist framework, he employed the rhetoric of the oppressed against the oppressor—in his example, the oppressor was the United States and the oppressed third world countries. His call resonated well with the community. He saw oppression as a "process

of dehumanization,"[1] negating the freedom that the Qur'an prescribes. He not only called on the *'ulama* to join the revolution under God against the tyrannical forces of the world,[2] but also called all Arabs and Islamic peoples and, consequently, the Lebanese nation as a whole to join the revolution.[3]

In 1972, following the death of Imam Musa el-Sadr,[4] the Iranian Ayatollah Kho'i appointed him as his *wakil* (deputy) in Lebanon. He founded a large *mabarrat,* or charitable institution, in Beirut comprising an orphanage, a mosque, a women's cultural center, a school, and a library and devoted his energy to expanding on the revolutionary ideas of Ayatollah Khomeini. In return, Ayatollah Khomeini named him the *marji' al-taqlid* (source of tradition, imitation) and he was appointed vice president of the Central Council of the International Hizbullah in Tehran. Similarly, he grew in political significance in Lebanon, becoming President of the Lebanese Council of Hizbullah, which consisted of the Iranian ambassador, the Lebanese '*ulama*, and security strongmen responsible for clandestine operations.[5]

Fadlallah became the spiritual *al-murshid al-ruhi,* an infallible guide and the most subtle promoter of the Shi'i cause in Lebanon since the 1980s. He declared that his allegiances transcended Lebanon to embrace a universal Islam, and openly declared the indebtedness of the Lebanese Shi'i to the Iranian Revolution for awakening their Islamic consciousness. He adhered to the *usuli* (fundamentalist) tradition of modern Shi'i; a *usuli* gives authoritative opinions and advice to individuals facing problems in modern circumstances. In his *ijtihad* to reconcile scriptures with modern times, he declared the role of women in Islam as not static, and laws regarding women were subject to change. He formulated the Islamic concepts for the new generation of Shi'i, who in turn, are now carrying Islam far from the blind tradition or adherence to historical misinterpretation. Interpretation is not absolute, but open to reinterpretation in the light of current advances in knowledge and technology.

In *Dunya el-Mar'a*, Fadlallah referring to verse *Nisa'* verse 4:1 states that men and women share the same soul: "O mankind, fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul, and created from it its spouse, and propagated from both many men and women. Fear God in Whose name you make requests one of another, and sever not the ties of kinship. God watches well over you."[6] Stressing the egalitarian spirit of Islam, women and men, he argues, share the same soul and benefit from an absolute moral and spiritual equality. Weakness is inherent to both men and women as expressed in *Nisa'* verse 4:28. "God is all-Knowing, All-Wise. So also God wishes to pardon you but those who pursue their passions with you to veer utterly from your path. Yet God wishes to lighten your burden, for humans were created feeble."[7] Furthermore, Islamic history departed from this Qur'anic

teaching, but the Caliphate system transformed it into a monarchical one in order to build ties with non-Islamic neighbors, social habits picked up from Islamic expansion. The isolation of imams from Islamic life "resulted in chaotic Islamic society and this led to a progressive suppression of women into a secondary backward state through unjust, backward laws."[8] The following Islamic movements (referring to the Sunni Caliphate) marginalized women ordaining them with an inferior status.

What are his thoughts about veiling? It is necessary to regulate relations between men and women and the *hijab* is one of the most important individual identity protectors. Islam limits individual liberty because excessive freedom engenders chaos, and this reflects negatively on society. The veil helps women to control their instincts of seduction, which exercises a seductive influence on men. In addition, Islam prescribes *hijab* as a religious duty. This conservative Islamic response, calling women to cover their face and arms in accordance with the wives of the Prophet Muhammad and highlighted in the Qur'anic *Nour* verse 24:31, is similarly given in the writings of Abu al-A'la Mawdudi.[9] He insists on a more strict seclusion of women stating, "Though the veil has not been specified in the Qur'an, it is Qur'anic in spirit,"[10] thus binding the veil to all Muslim women.

In accordance with verse 24:31, the veil or the *hijab* once was simply a command of Qur'an, always required for the Muslim woman:

> Tell believing women to avert their eyes, and safeguard their private parts, and not to expose their attractions except what is visible. And let them wrap their shawls around their breast lines, and reveal their attractions only before their husbands or fathers, or fathers-in-law, or sons, or sons of their husbands, or brothers, or sons of brothers, of sons of sisters, or their womenfolk, or slaves, or male attendants with no sexual desire, or children with no intimate knowledge of the private parts of women. And let them not stamp their feet to reveal what they hide of their ornaments.
>
> Believers all! Repent before God that you might succeed.[11]

This text does not explicitly direct women to wear the veil, the verse permits a woman to unveil before certain relations, having certain parts of her body unveiled, but without specification. It could be a call for modesty that men and women both observed. Nevertheless, a veiled woman would say nothing about whether she felt liberated or not during that time—it was a tradition carried out from the Prophet Mohamed's time and expressed only the socioeconomic status of women. In these modern times, strict laws about women's dress often indicate the religious orientation of a particular government, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Turkey forbids women to wear

the veil in public spaces. Since Ataturk abolished the *khalifa* in 1926, he moved the Turkish state as well as Turkish women to a more secular identity. Some citizens seem to be dissatisfied with the law and consider veiling a personal choice.

For Fadlallah, the wearing of the veil is not the reason behind the backwardness of the Arab Islamic reality. Backwardness is linked to the scientific stagnation and to the political situations imposed upon Muslims through wars, conflicts and regimes unsupportive of people's freedom. Similarly, no link exists between terrorism and veiling, and words such as backwardness; the West exploits fundamentalist and terrorists in order to rouse the international opinion against Muslims and activists.[12]

For Fadlallah, *hijab* is a religious requirement regulating gender relations to preempt improper influences. *Hijab* derives from modesty, calling women to hide their femininity, which exerts a seductive and even subversive pressure on men. He calls men to look at women as human beings and not as women. *Hijab* constitutes a means to stop potential avenues leading to *inhiraf,* deviation from *halal*. Veiling had almost disappeared, except in rural areas or in very conservative families in Lebanon. As a conservative religious leader, he contributes to the Islamicization of modernity, reinterpreting Islam to be compatible with modern times while infusing Islamic values to modernity. Indeed, new opportunities for women, as well as financial necessities, have pressed them to work outside their home. Becoming part of the workforce, such a restriction might be protective for women, and those wearing the veil might feel more comfortable while surrounded by strangers, particularly in the city. Women need to face modernity in light of the values of their own religion. Muslim feminists do not assert an individualistic conception of rights, but argue for respect and legal protection within their religious tradition. Perhaps the return to the veil is a means to reaffirm their identities in the era of globalization.

In his book, *Ta'amullat Islamiyya Hawla al-Mar'a*, rather than asserting an individualistic conception of freedom and rights emanating from a materialistic philosophy, he condemns an absolute freedom in personal lives and advocates a responsible form of freedom. He applies to the unity of nature, term used in Muslim theology to refer to the unity of God, *tawhid*. Men and women are both God's creation and share the same soul.[13] Men and women are both equal human beings and their behavior cannot be left to their own devices; both genders require guidance. He acknowledges a vision of regulations in alignment with this unity. Because of the nature of men and women's relation to the universe as living organisms as well as their interactions with other members of society, they are active members, influencing and influenced by the course of events, and they cannot separate themselves

from the lively existence, and each of their movements are part of the cosmic organization. As a servant of God, the creator of the universe, they must obey orders without viewing them as contrary to individual or social interests. God's regulations bring harmony and morality that encompasses all aspects of life, and this is the key in bringing about balance and happiness in life and the hereafter. Just as a body is best fitted when all its parts function in perfect harmony, a society functions best when all its parts work together for the good of the whole. This vision frees men as well as women from the grip of corruption.[14]

In this respect, Islam places legitimate moral constraints on sexual relations between men and women. Islam considers marriage as the "natural respiration" to human's instincts and forbids all other form of sexual relations. Therefore, the mixing of the sexes must be regulated. Fadlallah, as modernizer taking into account the necessities of modern times, argues that not all mixing of sexes is forbidden; only mixing of sexes that lead to *inhiraf*, or deviation and deprivation is forbidden. "Whenever a man and a woman meet, the devil is their companion." Unchaperoned meetings between men and women are not permitted because they potentially lead to sexual relations. Depending on the nature of the relations, interaction between genders should not be free and casual. Family honor is the highest moral value and Islam clearly establishes patterns of behavior: *halal* (lawful) versus *haram* (forbidden). Extramarital and premarital sex is forbidden because it subverts marriage. Islam clearly defines patterns of behavior to protect women and to avoid situations that may give rise to *haram.* Men and women need to avoid being alone. The wearing of the veil *hijab* is one of his commendations.

The "verse of choice," argues Barbara Stowasser, *Nur* 33:28–29,[15] is addressed to the wives of the Prophet: "O Prophet, tell your wives: If you desire this present life and its adornments, come let me provide for you and part with you amicably. But if you choose God and His Prophet and the Abode of the Hereafter, God has made ready for the righteous among you a most glorious reward." Verse 33:32 continues, "O wives of the Prophet, you are not like other women if you are pious. So do not speak enticingly lest he who has sickness in his heart lusts after you, but be chaste in your speech," immediately followed by verse 33:33 in which the expression "O wives of the Prophet" does not appear. The form of address is plural and encompasses all women. "Remain in your homes, and do not display your adornments, as was the case with the earlier Age of Barbarism . . . God wishes only to drive away pollution from you, members of the household (*ahl al-bayt)*, and to purify you, purify you completely." God will provide double reward for the righteous or double punishment in case of immoral indecency.[16] These verses played an important role in Islamic legal thought and because of the context,

Qur'anic exegesis has traditionally understood these verses as addressing the wives of the Prophet. Today, Normativist Islamists reinterpret the verses as addressing all Muslim women.

Therefore, the Prophet's wives are commanded to stay home and avoid *tabarruj,* displaying of their adornments. Barbara Stowasser examined the definition of the word *tabarruj* and its changing meanings over the ages. The classical exegesis explains *tabarruj as* strutting, flirting or coquettishness, embellishment, the flaunting of bodily charms . . . as it was practiced before Abraham's prophethood, when women wore open shirts and revealing garments. It is also interpreted as a head veil untied allowing glimpses of the neck ears and earrings, but in general, *tabarruj* meant the public display of women wearing revealing garments to show off their physical features, ornaments, make-up . . . Today *tabarruj* means a revealing of any sort such as any hairstyle, makeup, color for the eyes, manicure. Any Western clothes or cloth fashioned the western style has come to be considered as a threat to Islamic society. Thus, "applied to all women, *taburruj* has come to signify the very antithesis of *hijab* in the latter's extended meaning of a concealing garment worn outside the house."[17]

Fadlallah's interpretation of the Arabic word *tabarruj* did not include ornaments such as bracelets or necklaces; it specifically means not revealing parts of the body. He advocates moderation to avoid any provocation by adding *tabarruj,* because men's instincts are prone to inflammation by women's femininity. *Halal* is moderation and *haram* is to negatively sway one's instincts. He even considers plastic surgery to improve a deformed part of the body permissible. He allows moderate activity by women outside the house, and he suggested a mental veil *hijab dhihni* for both women and men to avoid sexual thoughts or lewd dreams. He even forbids women to walk behind the coffin in a funeral because of her emotions.

Clearly, Sheikh Fadlallah's *tafsir* of the preceding verses transcended the quoted traditions of seclusion and domesticity defined as core of female social righteousness, which also signified their exclusion from any institutionalized participation in public affairs. On the contrary, the increasing role of Hizbullah's women has become a well-acknowledged issue.

Sheikh Fadlallah passed away in May 2010. The religious school of Najaf decreed a national mourning for three days, and the school of Qom expressed its profound sorrow. Moreover, the media revealed him as a man of dialogue and modernity as well as an avant-garde spirit preaching Modern Islam. Messages of condolences poured; the head of the parliament, Nabih Berri, paid homage to his wisdom and open mind, a loss for the Islamic/Arab world and humanity. Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hizbullah, eulogized him as a father, a guide full of wisdom, and a rampart at all stages in the struggle

against oppression and against occupation. The Sunni Mufti Mohammad Kabbani saluted the *fakih* as the upholder of universal values in favor of peace and dialogue. The Druze Sheikh Akl deplored the disappearance of a symbol of an enlightened Islam, and a great authority in religion that defended dialog and coexistence. Above all, the media addressed him as the champion of women's rights in Muslim society.

Family Law in Islam

The ways in which legislators and governments have interpreted the Prophet's message and which revelations they emphasize has been historically and still is disputed, particularly with regard to personal status or family laws. Two voices in Islam related to gender find themselves at odds; the Orthodox and Islamist Islam applies literal Qur'anic translation to legislation, while Liberal Islam advocates a consideration of the social context of the revelations and an adaptation of these messages to adjust to contemporary realities.

Family laws governing marriage, divorce, polygamy, and inheritance are the cornerstones of the system of male privilege and these laws, established in the first three or four centuries of Islam, have remained profoundly resistant to change and continue to govern gender relations.[18] We will now read these interpretations of the Qur'anic messages in dialogue with Sheikh Hussein Fadlallah's views and other liberal contemporary feminists.

Marriage

In rural areas of Lebanon, the Muslim family has remained even more traditionalist than the Christian family. The authority of the husband and the father is more tyrannical, the conception of the family more patriarchal, more endocentric.

> The Qur'an attributes the institution of marriage to God Himself: verse 30: 21.
>
> Among His wonders is that He created for you, from among yourselves, spouses with whom to find comfort, and instilled between you love and mercy. In these are signs for a people who ponder and reflect.[19]

However, love is not what brings about the majority of marriages. The husband is in some cases only a substitute, so to speak, for the groom is not always the man that the forced bride truly desires. This dissociation is not an accident—it is implied by the conception of the institution itself. The economic and sexual union of a man and a woman is a matter of transcending to the level of collective interest, not of assuring individual happiness.

In these patriarchal systems, marriages in which engaged couples, chosen by the authority of their parents, do not get to know each other well until their wedding day still occur today. Marriage is a question of founding the venture of a life, considered in its social aspect, not just a sentimental whim.

Sheikh Fadlallah recognizes human emotions and does not ask people to suppress them, but rather, to nurture them in a way approved by God. He depicts four categories of Love. Platonic love, based on mutual respect, is in response to the attributes of one's partner. Physical love in response to physical attraction is instinctual and leads to sexual craving, and is therefore forbidden. Spiritual or emotional love is in response to the love of parents, children, family, and friends that stimulates a need to care and protect; and finally, sublimated love that leads to adoration of the loved one is not permitted. Love, which emanates from the brain, must be controlled in order to lead to marriage and family life. While engaged, a couple may have visits, although a chaperone must supervise. However, the prospective husband has the right to examine his fiancée's hair, neck, arms, and legs only, not the entire body, to make sure she is not deformed. In case of prolonged engagement, the couple may undertake *mut'a* or temporary marriage. *Mut'a* is legal and entails a dowry *mahr*, a waiting period '*idda* of three months for the wife before she can remarry to determine parenthood in case of pregnancy, and full inheritance rights for children born from this temporary union. However, the nature of this limited contract does not include any financial provision or inheritance rights for the women, and women have the right to refuse it. Providentially, this type of marriage is declining.

The institution of marriage seeks to protect men and women from sinful relations and to endorse the formation of families. Marriage requires maturity and responsibility and, most importantly, the ability to protect and provide for the family. Sayyed Fadlallah cites the verse Byzantines, verse 30–21, and states that marriage is a sacred link. Both spouses should listen to God's call in instilling happiness in the marriage through a relation of love and affection; such relation should be based on affection, equality, respect, admiration, and freedom. Spouses (wives) are accorded the same rights in what is recognized and suitable, as the Prophet has always manifested respect and love to his wives.

Classical jurists based their interpretation on verse Cow 2:228[20] related to divorce, in which the Qur'an specifies that men have a degree of advantage over women and misinterpreted the spiritual and legal meaning of marriage. Marriage became a contract in which men possessed the women's bodies, thus resulting in unfairness for treatment of women; many marriage contracts were terminated without the consent of women. One would ask where is love and mercy when a women is forced to wed a stranger? Is not marriage a sacred

union between two free and equal partners who decide to build together their happiness? To those Fadlallah suggests *Baqara* verse 2:187[21] "It is licit for you, on a night of fasting, to lie down with your wives. They are a garment to you, and you are as a garment to them,"[22] stating that a marriage founded on love and mercy is a fulfillment of the human nature as creation of God through the Qur'anic teaching. Marriage protects and allows women to live in full harmony with their husbands, and wives are in no way enslaved by their husbands.

Fadlallah advocates the establishment of a double personality for the wife as she assumes the dual role of devoted Muslim, and mother and wife, through good deeds and sacrifices without expecting anything in return. Thus, a woman fulfills the Islamic call and furthers her spiritual closeness to God through her devotion to her husband and family. She has to control her actions and emotions even in cases where her husband fails to fulfill his obligations. She cannot leave the house without her husband's permission since the husband has control over his wife in sexual matters and related details. A Muslim women is obligated to satisfy her husband's sexual desire, otherwise she is "disobedient" and punished. The Qur'anic verse Women 4:34 appears to be the single most important verse that regards gender and sexual relationships indicating that men are the *qawwamun* of women. "Men are legally responsible for women, inasmuch as God has preferred some over others in bounty, and because of what they spent from their wealth. Thus, virtuous women are obedient, and preserve their trusts, such as God wish them to be preserved. And those may rebel, admonish, and abandon them in their beds, and smack them. If they obey you, seek no other way against them. God is Highest and Mightiest."[23] Fadlallah translates this verse to say that men are the natural leaders and managers of the household and their wives' affairs because Allah had made one superior to the other. He states, "Sex satisfies a natural instinct and one should not be ashamed of satisfying it."[24] Both a husband and wife must satisfy their spouse's sexual needs. Nonetheless, the husband has the right to beat his wife if she does not satisfy his sexual needs. Beating, or rather controlled gentle beating—as to not cause fracture or bleeding—becomes necessary if other alternatives have not been fruitful. The man's right to discipline derives from his superior knowledge of what is good and beneficial. Differences due to conception, giving birth, staying up nights, hard work during the day, and menstruation lead to a state of weakness in women. Men live free of these burdens and thus possess clear judgment and intellectual superiority. Shortcomings of women are not a condemnation of the female sex; they exist and are understood within the context of the faith. Islam does not say that women are inferior to men, rather that they are different.

Fadlallah delivered a new legal opinion *fatwa*[25] on the issue of the beating in 2007, allowing a wife to withstand her husband's physical violence using analogous violence, beating him back but only in self-defense, thus saving her from any physical, psychological, and social violence within the household. Reiterating that Islam has provided the legislation that leads to harmony and peace and reconciliation between love and harmony on the one hand and the Byzantines verse 30:21 and *qawwama* in Women verse (4:34) on the other, the Qu'ranic foundation of a harmonious marriage, Fadlallah delegates the right of beating to women, which has so far been exclusively reserved for men. To remedy women's physical and legal weakness, he argues, and given the fact that the right of divorce is only available to men, this *fatwa* permits women to take responsibility for their own problems without allowing others to interfere in their marital affairs. The *fatwa* limits a husband's excessive or misused authority. After all, in Islam, beating becomes necessary to remedy women's deviance and only after a wife does not respond to her husband's reproach or chastisement by sexual abstinence. Thus, the *fatwa,* continues Fadlallah, is not contradictory with other *'ahadith*, calling for mutual respect and the wife's obedience. The *fatwa* reinforces the natural right of self-defense for women when facing unjustifiable violence, and after the wife has explored all legitimate means to prevent her husband from using violence to "better" the state of their marriage, when in fact, beating is detrimental to their union. Again, this is her natural and legitimate right to counteract oppression. Finally, he states that the *fatwa* in its content and objectives aims to stimulate "thinking" before "acting," thus eroding violence, which in turn, leads to similar violence, in conformity with *hadith* "God is gentle, He likes gentleness and rewards kindness not cruelty."[26]

The legal legacy of Islam has "largely ignored the Qur'anic emphasis on equality and equal justice to women, and is supported by Orthodox Islam."[27] Some believe that the Islamist position is reactive in nature, in that it denies itself growth in defense of Western and liberal Islam's assertion of its backwardness.

A fruitful argument stated in Sheikh Fadllalah's *Ta'amullat* is that each husband and wife should accept the fact that the spouse does not belong to the entire family, she/he only belongs to him/her, being his wife, and vice versa. Patriarchal mores allowed the in-laws, particularly the mother-in-law, to interfere in the daughter-in-law's daily life. Books could be written on this excruciating issue that we, all Lebanese women—Christians and Muslims—endured and in some cases are still enduring.

As for the controversial issue of *zawaj el-mut'a,* temporary marriage allowed only in the Shi'i sect, Sheikh Fadlallah gives the following exegesis *tafsir*: Shi'i *fiqh* legitimizes this type of marriage in some circumstances

in which a lasting relationship between a man and a woman is unlikely for reasons of compatibility, lifelong harmony between the spouses, religion, or beliefs. As protective measure for women, a legal temporary marriage transforms what would be otherwise *haram* to *halal*. This legislation "resolves a sexual desire in a humane manner."[28] Shi'i movements contested this practice accusing it of being archaic; however, Sheikh Fadlallah believes that creating rules for illegitimate sexual relations or *zina* is for the well-being of society, unlike in Western societies, where illegitimate relations are so abundant. He goes on to compare the temporary marriage to alcohol. The Cow verse 22:219 "They ask you about wine and gambling. Say: 'In them both lies grave sin, though some benefit, to mankind. But their sin is more grave than their benefit.' "[29] Since benefits from this legislation clearly exceed its disadvantages, the Shi'i *fiqh* view this path of interpretation as an obligation. *Mut'a* is a social necessity to protect against adultery and prostitution when regular marriages no longer satisfy sexual needs in case of female frigidity or prolonged travel, to break the boredom of a regular marriage, or in case of the impossibility of a regular marriage. Given as a means for sexual release, Fadlallah does not advise this type of marriage to virgins, because it might be psychologically damaging and socially detrimental to their reputation and their future; he rather limits *mut'a* to widows and divorcees.

Civil Marriage

Civil marriage does not fulfill Islamic regulations and therefore Islam does not recognize it. Sheikh Fadlallah gives three reasons for the incompatibility of a civil legislation with *Shari'a*. First, from a structural standpoint, a civil marriage lacks the requirement of the Islamic method, in which the exchanged sentences between the newly wed "I marry my soul to you for a dowry of . . . " And the groom replies, "I accept this union according to the Sunna (sayings and doings) of God and the Prophet" This immutable issue of "personal status" is part of the *'ibadat*[30] defined by God's laws; a civil marriage does not indicate the religious affiliation of the couple. Second, Islam forbids a Muslim man to marry an atheist woman, but allows him to marry a woman from the People of the Book accepted by Islam and recognized as a monotheistic religion. Third, in Islam, the dissolution of a marriage lies in the hands of the husband or in a situation in which one of the spouses had some abnormality, such as insanity. The dissolution of a civil marriage is subject to civil laws relative to a particular country, and thus is incompatible with the personal status of Islamic laws. In addition, Islam differentiates between religions to protect Muslims from pressures leading them to *inhiraf*, or divergence from the straight path. Islam does not allow a Muslim girl to wed a non-Muslim

unless he converts to Islam, the rationale being that a Muslim husband cannot support a non-Muslim wife, a Christian or Jewish husband may be intolerant of his Muslim wife's faith. This is a protective measure for her Islamic faith. Christianity and Judaism do not recognize the prophetic message of Muhammad.[31]

Divorce

Qassim Amin says, "Divorce is one of the special affects of marriage."[32] Divorce is the juridical-sanctioned rupture of the bond of marriage, which is to say that its principal effect is to dissolve the conjugal tie and to abolish all of the spouses' reciprocal duties and obligations. Muslims accept divorce because it is an efficient remedy in certain cases. However, it is a matter of man's right, whereas a woman cannot divorce without going through a judge and obtaining her husband's consent. However, cases in which a woman can demand a divorce do exist: when the husband is incapable of meeting her needs, when he is suffering from a mental or physical illness, or when he is absent over the course of a year. "Divorce is illicit, undesirable in itself, but permitted due to necessity,"[33] and in addition, "repudiation is the worst of permitted things," said the Prophet.[34]

Sheikh Fadlallah evokes verse *Nisa'* 4:34 arguing that *qawwama* applies only to married life and that men are obligated to protect and provide for the family. Q*awwama* is ordained because in the family sphere there is room for only one manager. Physical and psychological differences between the two sexes have fixed the choice on men, arguing that women are too emotional and sometimes irrational. From Cow verse 2:228, "Women have the selfsame rights and obligations in conformity with fairness, but men are a grade more responsible than them. God is Almighty, All Wise."[35] The "grade" refers to the authority of men to divorce, yet men should not abuse their authority and there is no *qawwama* on any other issue outside the marriage. This gendered restriction does not apply to all areas of life.

Liberal Muslim feminist thinker Amina Waddud points out that the Qur'an does not place any inherent value on men and women and does not strictly delineate their roles in society. According to her interpretation, the Qur'an treats women as individuals just as it treats men as individuals, and the only distinction between the genders is based on *taqwa*, which she defines as God-conscious piety.[36] In the same vein, Leila Ahmad translates verse 2:228 as one can earn higher degree, *daraja,* in Allah's eyes through good deeds. The text does not place value on particular deeds, which is left to social systems. As social systems have tended to value men's deeds more highly than those of women, this does not indicate that Allah intended male

superiority over women. Divorce is a lawful option for irreconcilable differences. Men do not technically have a degree *daraja* over the female in divorce procedures as this would demonstrate an inequity in the Qur'an; she indicates that just because the Qur'an makes no reference to women repudiating their husbands, this does not mean that they are deprived from this power and that they cannot do it.

The Shi'i modality of divorce is different from the Sunnis with regard to the *khul'* divorce in which women are delegated the right of divorce. For both Sunni and Shi'i, the right of divorce falls on the husband unless stipulated otherwise in the contract and for both sects divorce is despised and considered as final recourse after exhaustion of all efforts of reconciliation between the spouses. A wife goes to court to ask the legislator to divorce for the previously mentioned reasons. In *khul'* divorce, peculiar to the Shi'i sect, a wife may divorce her husband by paying the amount of money agreed upon *mahr*, and this type of divorce is irrevocable when the word *khul'* is pronounced. This divorce may be voided if women pronounced *khul'* while menstruating. Finally, the *'idda,* waiting period, must be observed as stipulated for other regular divorce. During this period, the wife retains her rights and continues her obligations.

Regarding custody of children, the divorced wife keeps her children until they are two years old, then the husband claims them. Divorced women's duties are limited to the care for the natural need of the children. She has to consult and have the father's approval to be able to travel with her children, use their funds, or decide on their education. In case of the husband's death, the wife will have custody unless she declines it and envisages a remarriage. For Christians, canon laws allow the divorced wife to keep her children until they are seven. This seems to be slightly less harsh on mothers!

Polygamy

The Prophet Muhammad had multiple wives, and shortly after marrying Aisha and then Hafsa, the Qur'anic verses revealed a permission of polygamy. The verses were revealed during a time of heavy battle, and men were encouraged to take multiple wives to remedy the concern of widows and orphans, and therefore should be read as suited to the time of the Prophet and not necessarily to all times. Verse *Nisa*' 4:3 "Marry whoever pleases you among women- two, three of four; but if you fear you will not be fair to them all, then one only, or else what you own of slaves. This would be closer to impartiality." The Qur'an adds in *Nisa'* verse 4:129–130, rendering the authorization nearly impossible, "You will not be able to act equitably with your women, even if you apply yourself to do so. Do not turn wholly away from her, leaving

her like one suspended. But if you settle with her amicably and fear God, God is All-forgiving, Compassionate to each. If a couple separates, God shall suffice each from His bounty. God is All-Encompassing, All Wise."[37] It is necessary to be just, and one cannot be. Therefore, the ideal is monogamy, unless circumstances are such that polygamy constitutes a lesser evil. Similarly, in a *hadith*, Aisha said to the Prophet, "O God, this is my feat, do no hate me for what I have and for you do not have." Polygamy is subject to a permission accompanied by conditions aiming at rendering it an exception. If it has not always been this way in practice, it is again due to social tradition and is contrary to the spirit of Qur'anic law. Polygamy rarely exists in Lebanon.

Inheritance

William Montgomery Watt and Leila Ahmad indicate that in Arabia during the Prophet Muhammad's time, a patrilineal system was in the process of replacing a matrilineal one. The shifting trade routes engendered a growing prosperity and an intensification of individualism. Men prospering and amassing considerable amounts of wealth wanted to ensure their inheritance to their sons, and not simply to an extended family related to daughters and sisters. This was one of the reasons that led to the deterioration of women's rights. *Shari'a* law thus provided women with a number of rights and by instituting rights of property ownership and inheritance as well as marriage and divorce, Islam provided women with certain basic safeguards. Muslim women retain their own assets.

According to Islamic law, a woman has an absolute right to her property, which she can use as she pleases if she is of age, without the need for her husband's authorization. There is no difference between a man and a woman in this respect. She can have full possession of her own assets, inherit them, receive them as gifts, acquire them by working, give them, sell them, and dispose of them in all legal manner; these rights are inalienable. Her personal fortune is not a mortgage to pay her husband's debts.

If the prescriptions concerning inheritance seem to disadvantage her (Islam limits the daughter's inheritance to half of that of the son), it should not be forgotten that besides her financial autonomy gained through her own assets, she has the right to support, to which the tribunal could oblige her father, her husband, her son, and so on, as well as to her *mahr* or dowry, in the case of separation. This amount is her inalienable property, and she can take the possessions of her husband if he dies, a personal right to collect it.

These few remarks allow us to realize to what point the spirit of Muslim law is liberal. The undeniable risk is that the magistrate's interpretation is

often tainted by the contagion of a sociological milieu still obstructed by prejudices that have little to do with the Qur'an.

Germaine Tillion has shown how the regulation of inheritance had been determined to create an endogamic system intended to curb the circulation of riches by checking the woman's free choice. This system is worsened further by the systematic disinheritance of girls/daughters. How far we have come from true Qur'anic feminism! The custom very frequently requires that the land and the house pass exclusively to male children. This is justified by the mentality that it is pure madness to give one's estate to others, and from this comes the insistence in the Orient/East on the "preferred marriage" that qualifies *ibn el 'amm* (son of the paternal uncle), to obtain his female cousin's fortune.

On the contrary, others disinherit their family to the benefit of the religion and commit their inheritance to God through a notary act (*waqf*).

Effectively, "in Islam as in Christianity, the Mediterranean woman was regularly despoiled . . . This despoilment currently only survives in some residual zones; the cause of this evolution must be sought in an economic progress that brings everything about (notably destroying, more and more, the "well-being of the family," and inducing an unceasingly growing number of women to take on a profession."[38] In this evolution of mentalities, let us note that a Sunni Lebanese prime minister, Riad Solh, converted secretly to Shi'i to cut his brothers off from his inheritance in order to hand it down to his daughters only. In the absence of male heir, a Sunni daughter receives only a third of the inheritance, the remaining three quarters go to the male branch of the family.

Commenting on family laws, and particularly on *Shari'a*, Labrusse argues that for a variety of religious, historic, and sociological reasons, laws of Muslim countries are those that until a recent date imposed on women a total personal and patrimonial subjugation . . . . However, from the beginning of the twentieth century, Islamic law seems to be engaged in the path of new conception for family and women. Legislators attempt to engage the autonomy of the couple vis-à-vis the extended family group, to protect women and to recognize their personality by way of limiting polygamy, and imposing a judicial repudiation, or even to authorize women to seek divorce, and to reinforce her inheritance rights.[39]

At present, women are contesting conditions of inequality to improve their position in society, and they are themselves involved in *ijtihad* to reinterpret the scriptures in the egalitarian spirit the Qur'an prescribed. Shi'i are increasingly participating in the functions of Hizbullah, in the public sphere as well as from behind the scenes. However, as a consequence of the civil war and the power relation of the region, a sectarian identity has solidified. Modernization has been seen as Westernization, and globalization has aggravated

behavior as it relates to identity. Western modernity and progress no longer have one trajectory. It appears that the Muslim world's immediate response to the dilemma posed by the need for modernization has become religious, if not religious radicalism. As Amin Maalouf, a Lebanese writer puts it, "Religious fundamentalism has not been the immediate, spontaneous, and natural choice of Arabs and Muslims in general. They were not tempted to go along that path until all others were blocked. And until, paradoxically that path itself—the path of atavism and conservatism—had come into fashion and was "in the air again."[40] As the modern unraveled, Lebanon began facing alternative modernities. A lack of a unified Lebanese identity has led to the emergence of sectarian identity categories such as modernity as it relates to Hizbullah women.

Growing Role of Hizbullah's Women in Lebanon

Social and political dynamics changed because of the increasing role of women in the functions of Hizbullah. The United States has labeled Hizbullah as a terrorist organization because of its objective to resist Israel and its attack on the US Marine stationed in Beirut in 1983. The party did engage in violent acts, but at the same time, its social arm became an active force improving social life for the Shi'i in Lebanon. The 33-day conflict with Israel in 2006 boosted the presence of Hizbullah in Lebanon because of their effective response to the growing needs of the conflict-ridden Shi'i population, especially in Southern Lebanon and in the *dahia,* the southern suburb of Beirut, where their headquarters is located. Hizbullah proved itself to be a political organization as much as a social one, focusing on societal change that emphasizes the Shi'i communal identity. The way the Hizbullah spread itself in the community helped the party communicate its message to the population in order to gain support among the younger generation by opening schools, hospitals, and public welfare programs for the needy and for those who have lost family members. The party proved its capability to respond to immediate social and educational needs of the community. As seen in the documentary *33 Days*,[41] members of Hizbullah distributed food and medicine to civilians and combatants during the conflict. Among its various social services, the party provided assistance to the family of martyrs, widows, and orphans. These various services resulted in an increased responsibility and popularity of the party in Lebanon.

Concerns arose about how these increasing services were performed and with what kind of workforce. Many members of the party were resistance fighters and men, but women served an important role in function of the organization. Women proved to further their position in society and improve

their political participation in the "upper echelons" of Islamist movements without calling themselves feminists. *L'enjeu* introduced itself, since it denied an adherence to Western feminist movements but still emphasized Islamic values; women looked for real opportunities to become potential leaders. They rejected an alignment with secular feminist movements, fearing a loss of support or legitimacy from their social base and the power of the men who had the power to change the status of women in society. Their goal was, through their efforts, to appeal not only for advancement of women but also to a broader social base across social and political classes through the Islamist movements in which they participated. Furthermore, their participation proved not only to have furthered their place in the social and political sphere, but they also proved themselves an indispensable asset to the party in completing its goals. One could say that Hizbullah's task to reach out to a broader base was increasingly accomplished by women who filled important positions for the organization; they were the group of people who were constantly fundraising for the organization, recruiting new members and acting as social workers or an outreach group to those receiving social services. Likewise, inside their households, they raise their children and support their spouses, should their husbands choose to become resistance fighters.

In an interview on Al-Jazeera news segments called *Everywomen*, the host asked each woman why they remained in dangerous areas, often risking their lives, to help the resistance, and what it is like being a mother or widow of a martyr. The host found out that many women are members of the Resistance Support Association, and as volunteers, they make crafts for sale whose proceeds go to fund the resistance, they sponsor programs to help outfit soldiers, and in another sponsorship program, they run an annual *iftar*. Around 7000 women from different social classes and religions attend this *iftar* to increase dialogue, specifically among women, about issues of conflict in Lebanon and the region as a whole.[42]

In a different setting, women are increasingly making appearances in the news media. During another segment of *Everywomen*, the host interviewed Zeinab al-Saffar, a news anchor on Al-Manar, Hizbullah's television channel in Beirut, accused by some countries as "terrorist television."[43] Zeinab is not directly involved in the party; however, she sympathizes greatly with the organization and promotes it through the news channel and through a class that she teaches in English at the Lebanese University. The Arab-Israeli conflict affected her personally when her home was destroyed in 2006. She spreads the ideology of Hizbullah by speaking to others in an academic setting as a university professor and also thoughtfully through her position at Al-Manar.

The *New York Times* highlighted the life of Zahra Fadlallah, another woman who played a crucial role in Hizbullah's effort in an article from

August 18, 2006.[44] At a very young age, the conflict with Israel greatly affected Zahra. She was only ten years old when her mother was arrested, and her brothers and sisters were already deeply involved in the organization. Later, her fiancé was also a Hizbullah activist. Back then, the party operated clandestinely through secret missions, and Zahra found inventive ways to help activists hide weapons and make it through Israeli checkpoints, in order for them to continue their surreptitious work in Southern Lebanon. Zahra and her mother heavily engaged themselves in charity work, by baking bread and cooking food to donate to Hizbullah's activists. However, toward the end of the war, both Zahra and her mother were killed in their basement, most likely from an air strike. Her fiancé buried her in a plot next to her brother in the fighters' cemetery because of her assistance to the party's efforts.

The lives of these women illustrate their greater presence in society and the changing perspectives of their roles and their crucial involvement in the Islamic organization. However, these women assert that they hold a different place in society than men, something like being "separate but equal," but they do not want to be like men or perform the same jobs that men do. With greater recognition of their accomplishments, they wear the veil. They say that this emanates from a choice and not because they are forced to do so, as is commonly believed in the West. They do not think that the veil is a symbol of male dominance, but rather an affirmation of their identity. They share the same ideological beliefs as men, and although they do not fight on the battlefields, their work behind the scenes is crucial to the survival of the organization. Finally yet importantly, they are likely to portray Hizbullah in a good light, which in turn helps to attract more people to their cause. They are living their alternative modernities.

Thus, the concept of modernity is not rigid. How a citizen becomes modernized or how modernity manifests itself changes based on space, time, religious or philosophical disciplinary approaches, and individual subjectivities, which lead to different outcome. The living of a theorized modernity varies from place to place, and in some places like Lebanon, it varies from one community to another. Modernity becomes this imaginative moment stemming from new ways of experiencing the world.

Interview—Individual and Communal Perspectives: Muslim Discourse

I was interested in the perspectives of both Muslim and Christian women on the changes that have occurred since the emergence of Hizbullah, and kept a record of those with whom I spoke. The interactions that follow provide a discourse that addresses each perspective through the voices of the women of Lebanon.

Muslim Perspectives

In July 2010 while visiting Mashghara, I met and spoke with several Shi'i women who were invited to the Hizbullah party headquarters. My mother and I were dropped off by a taxi at the building's entrance, greeted by warm and welcoming women's voices; much to my surprise, two of the women were wearing a black chador, Iranian style, from head to toe. While I was growing up in Lebanon 30 years ago, I went to Mashghara and the women were dressed quite differently; the traditional conservative attire, especially that for young women, struck me as a change. Nonetheless, the young women welcomed us into a lovely guest room and had even prepared *petits fours*, French cookies, and *maamoul*, a Lebanese pastry, for our meeting.

The man who arranged the meeting did not leave the room during our conversation; he listened very carefully to both my questions and the women's responses. The women seemed pleased to have a visitor from the neighboring Christian village who was interested in learning more about the various societal changes that they have faced as Shi'i women since 1982, and they took pride in their ability to have worked toward ameliorating their social conditions.

As members of Hizbullah, these women have relations with Saghbine. The wife of the Christian parliamentary representative sends invitations for events in the village and the women of Mashghara in turn reciprocate. They attend Christian funerals and sometimes weddings. The Muslim women of Mashghara interact a great deal with Christian women, often because their

husbands work side by side with Christian men, and also in organizing dinners for the village or Zajal parties—a popular dialectical poetry founded on a sharp musical tone—or even for marathons. The common activities under the auspices of the municipality encourage unity. The women of Mashghara do not feel a sense of being oppressed by their religion; they feel a sense of being able to be religiously committed and simultaneously embrace modernity.

Life has certainly changed in Mashghara after the arrival of Hizbullah in 1982. From an educational perspective, after Hizbullah was founded in 1982, the *Najah* school that is affiliated with the charitable *Imdad* organization was funded by Ayatollah Khomeini. The majority of children in Mashghara currently attend this school. Previously, the women shared that in addition to attending the public schools in Mashghara, 90 percent of Shi'i girls attended the Christian school run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, which used to be for girls only, but has since become coeducational like the public schools. However, the Shi'i school is coeducational until fourth grade, after which time boys and girls are educated separately.

There are now about 100 young women from Mashghara attending an institution of higher education. Much like in the United States, a master's degree or even a doctorate degree has become *haja darouriyya*, a necessity, they said. Although work opportunities are still scarce for women, the goal of educating young women is for her to find a suitable position to financially assist her family, while not restricting her from her responsibilities to raise children. The mother's professional presence has a positive impact on her children and on her own self-worth, and women discuss respecting their husbands more because they are able to help their families financially in a suitable job. Moreover, there are a rather large number of women in their forties who are just now able to go to college because they married and began their families at an early age, usually between 14 and 17 years. This practice marks a significant change in traditional Shi'i values and gender roles manifesting in practice.

One woman, who has three children, attended college, majored in philosophy, and graduated. As a Muslim woman, she shared that her goal is to capture and embrace this time, without forgetting that family is the basis of society and that her role as a mother is to form a family that is full of knowledge and awareness, which in turn contributes to a righteous society.

With education more accessible to women, the Center for Islamic Studies, *ma'had al ulum al Islamiyya,* has a branch in the West Bekaa for women 16–50 years old for continuing education, as well as the Islamic University in Khalde. Both offer courses of study in religious studies on the Islamic doctrine and the five pillars of Islam. A private university can offer a doctorate in Islamic studies, which can teach *tafsir* and *ijtihad*, explanation and reinterpretation of the Qur'an.

Another organization, the Organization for the Memorization of the Qur'an, *jamiyat li tahfiz al Qur'an,* emerged as a means of supporting the memorization of the Qur'an for children and other interested adults. *Imdad* also funds it, in order to prepare people to commit to living life according to the Qur'an.

Organization of the Martyr, *mu'asasat el shahid,* is a recreation center with special pools for young women and place for artisan work. Children of martyrs attend school alongside all other children, receiving no special treatment.

The face of marriage has changed with Hizbullah. Ninety percent of marriages today are of free choice. *Khatife*, abdication, is very rare because the pressure that was formerly placed on girls is almost nonexistent today. Parents are much more focused on their children's happiness. To their knowledge, just one case of *khatife* occurred during the last decade in Mashghara.

Social constraints, *dawabit*, have lessened. For instance, before 1982, most girls' schooling ended at high school without a second thought; college was never considered. Parents were afraid to send their daughters to colleges in big cities alone. The Lebanese University opened colleges in Zahle and at first this was a wonderful opportunity for women to attend courses there, with only a short commute. However, the branch in Zahle did not offer all majors and some women needed to go to Beirut to pursue their studies. Those who now attend college in Beirut live in foyers, student housing for women, near the Lebanese University campus. Parents are involved in the roommate selection process, and an inspector from Hizbullah monitors the building.

The university setting offers young women more opportunities to meet their *'ariss*, or husband-to-be, and others meet their future husband in a religious milieu in the city. Ninety-nine percent of girls bring the young man back to their parents' house, and parents tend to be agreeable to their daughter's choice, unless the family has a strong reservation or the young man seems questionable in some way. Many families still view four children as the ideal number, even in the face of the rising cost of living.

The Women's Food Market, *Mard Qurawi,* has also been a welcome addition in Mashghara. Every year, homemakers or women who do not hold jobs outside the home prepare all kinds of *muna*, or supplies, as provisions for winter, such as cracked wheat, lentils, grains, dried herbs, dried fruit, jams, and other necessities, in addition to handmade needlework or artisan local work, all of which is usually made by older women in the community. Through the market in which both Muslim and Christian families participate, they sell their products for a profit. Even some books of well-known authors, such as Nasri Sayegh, Fawaz Trabulsi, and Hasan 'Awada, from Mashghara are sold at the market.

In the face of a variety of societal changes, there has also been a return to hijab. One woman spoke of her mother, who did not wear the veil and

who used to live in Mexico. Now, she says, her mother is wearing it, and she is proud to wear it, thanks to Imam Khomeini. She believed that the West should not influence Mashghara, and that hijab is a way to protect girls, and sees it as a part of the Imam revolution. The women discussed the roots of Islam and the Qur'an. They felt that the revival of the Qur'an is in their best interest. Most girls now grow up wearing the hijab, and they do not think twice or think of removing it. Hijab is not seen as a barrier to cultural life. Even in the swimming pool, women wear their cloth and headscarf and feel comfortable.

Faith, the women agreed, is rooted in the doctrine, not in the customs. Women feel that their existence is meaningful, and they gain respect from their environment, and the ways in which they exist in their environment, including wearing the hijab from the young men with whom they can converse to a certain extent. Relations between men and women have limits, and the way a woman interacts and her behavior engender respect from her surroundings. Women are impacted by many factors: school, societal ambience, and the environment. One woman's daughter recently turned five and asked her mother if she could wear the veil, a request that comes from her upbringing and seeing the veil being modeled in a positive light by women in her life. Young men that are raised with the same religious upbringing appreciate and require this behavior.

Relations between Christians and Muslims have improved significantly recently. One woman commented lightly that the Christian sisters in the schools assure the parents that there is no alcohol in the cake so that they, as Muslims can eat it, an appreciation and awareness of customs from both sides.

Following the last municipal elections and the accord between the March 8 Coalition and Hizbullah, unity and friendship returned to Mashghara. This accord is reflected in women's organizations and other various collaborations. Muslim doctrine does not dictate separation; on the contrary, there is a need to be united while waiting for the *mahdi,* the Shi'i hidden Imam, to come. Women recounted having friends before 1982, when the war with Israel separated them from their friends, but now women describe feeling united again. The political situation strained relationships in the past. Differences are still poignant among politicians, but among regular people, many problems have dissipated. The war had a significant impact, *al hamdu lillah*, Grace be to God, and now, Christians and Muslims alike are working toward unity. Everything changed, people have begun to value culture, and donations for education and social assistance are plentiful. Young men even left their university studies to help protect the women during the transition.

The divorce rate has declined to 5 percent in Mashghara, mainly because of the free choice now available in marriage. For Sunni, the man needs only

to repeat *talka*, or "I divorce you," three times to his wife before two witnesses for the divorce to take place. For Shi'i, a witness is not necessary for a marriage contract, and a divorce is more complicated, and in some cases, such as pregnancy, a divorce cannot be granted. In addition, after a divorce, an *'idda*, or waiting period, of three months is necessary for the spouses before he or she may remarry. If, in a moment of anger, a man says that he wants to divorce without really intending it, he has to bear the responsibility of his words. Women can stipulate conditions in the marriage contract, in case she finds a situation in which she would like to ask for a divorce. There is a legal *Ja'fari*[1] court in the West Bekaa.

Marriage in the Shi'i rite requires the writing of the contract, *katb el kitab,* at home, and then registration in the Shi'i court that administers matters of personal status laws and in the governmental agency. Rights are common and equal for both men and women. Awareness, good upbringing, education are essential, and divorce is the worst thing for God.

Second marriages are rare in the West Bekaa compared to the south. Women in the cities, especially Beirut, have more freedom than in smaller communities. They find that their reputation and how they are perceived by others are important, and whereas in Beirut one may benefit from certain anonymity, Mashghara has a committed religious community that pays close attention to matters of legality and compliance with the *shari'a* law.

Women in Mashghara prefer marrying Shi'i men, although the women knew of others who had married Sunni men. By and large, Muslim women avoid marrying Christians to prevent a potential ideological crisis, as they phrased it. There is no conflict if a young Shi'i man wishes to marry a Christian woman, as she is expected to convert to Islam. Generally, this type of marriage is more successful in couples that are less religiously committed than others.

Gender equality regarding inheritance also abides by a certain cultural norm. The rule is that a brother may inherit a share double than that of his sister. The reasoning is societal; men bear the responsibility to provide financially for the family. A woman can use her inheritance as she pleases and the law does not require her to spend it on her household or family.

Caring for the aging adults is a task most often undertaken by their children. Nursing homes exist, although that is viewed as the worst solution for an elderly parent, especially for women. In the event that an aging mother's children live away from her, the children will usually hire a nurse to care for her, and the children visit her as often as they are able. However, Islamic upbringing stipulates that children are to have their mothers in their homes as they age. Teaching explicitly states that, one should never dismiss his or her parents; God's mercy is transferred from parent to child.

One of the first phrases learned for prayer is: God forgive me, and forgive them and have mercy on them in recognition of the way in which they raised me. In saying these prayers five times daily, many children are not able to have their aging parents live outside of their homes.

A mother's relationship with her son is usually strong and is as strong as possible with the daughter-in-law, depending on certain circumstances. For daughters who work outside the home, they are able to provide some financial assistance to their parents, which is a moral obligation. Often, parents feel as much affection for a son-in-law as for their own biological sons. In Mashghara, a man is expected to build an annex to his house for aging parents.

Mothers and daughters-in-law often have few problems, especially if mothers-in-law abide by Muslim teachings. Even if the daughter does not particularly care for her, she is obligated to support her according to scripture, although she is able to avoid contact as much as possible if necessary. She should, however, be cautious and not hurt or offend her in-laws. Problems do, however, arise and various organizations, *jam 'iyyat*, hold groups for young women aimed at discussing these sensitive issues to avoid escalating situations that could lead to divorce. Parents always advise their daughters to respect and support their mothers-in-law, and although many people resolve their domestic problems independently, some seek advice from the Sheikh. The women described conflict with their in-laws as a process of learning when to keep their mouths shut.

Modernity and traditions continue to coexist in Mashghara and elsewhere in Lebanon. However, these women, in contrast with Christian women, are not at all interested in a secular society. For them, religious thought, on both the individual and institutional levels, are an integral part of the construction of their alternative modernities. Women are now, through becoming change agents in their communities, taking center stage in the movement toward modernity as prescribed by Hizbullah. These women articulated their subjectivities and reformulated their societal and familial role based on Islamic teaching and the ways in which notions of modernity and their pieties intersect, which shapes their quotidian lives. Through discussing female roles through the life cycle and changes that have emerged through the founding of Hizbullah, a more accurate portrait of life in Mashghara became clear to me through their recounting of personal and observed experiences.

PART III

Transformation within a Multicultural Lebanon

CHAPTER 9

Modernity, Multiculturalism, and Lebanese Women

June 16th, 2008. As we landed on the runway in Beirut, everyone on the plane started clapping. One woman who we had met during our Paris layover to learn she was from Panama, started singing a Fairouz song "I missed you and I didn't forget you." I had tears in my eyes. Everyone was excited to be home. At the airport, there was a huge crowd of people waiting outside baggage claim, with flowers and gifts. We had the impression that everyone was celebrating a homecoming.

As I expected, on the way home, my daughter discovered that traffic was chaos. As we walked around Ashrafieh, we noticed the juxtaposition of old and new buildings. Ashrafieh has become a field of development; there was not an inch of land left unused. Nonetheless, I felt a joyous pagaille and this oriental insouciance that hid something grave. Once we walked on this land, we felt the permanent presence of the past.

June 22, 2008—A day that symbolically concretizes Lebanon's vocation: Lebanon is a country of mission, annunciation, openness and cooperation, for the beatification of the venerable Abouna Yaacoub el-Haddad.

We left the house at 9:00 and walked to downtown Beirut where we found hundred of pilgrims going towards the stage, set for the holy mass in the middle of "place des Martyrs" surrounded by beautifully well-restored old buildings. Despite these renovations, Beirut boasts a union of old and new buildings that characterizes the city's past. The altar is placed 500 meters away from the Sunni mosque built in the 1990s at the instigation of the former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. It is a beautiful, huge Mosque indeed, but it overshadows Saint George Maronite church, the symbol of the Christian Lebanon since its edification in the nineteenth century.

On this June 22, 2008, His Eminence the Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, the congregation's prefect for the Saints causes and a delegate of Pope Benedict XVI, made a special trip to Beirut to celebrate the mass of the bearable beatification.

Abouna, or Father Yacoub, who became a member of the Capucins order in 1893, propagated the third order and became adviser to ten thousand "tertiaires" or secular brothers and sisters. In 1937, he followed the footstep of Saint Francis of Assisi by helping elderly priests. A group of young girls generously offered to assist them. These young women became the heart of a new congregation. In December 8, 1930, Day of the Immaculate Conception, they became nuns under the name of "Franciscans of the Cross."

This day was a premiere because of the modification of a church's tradition. His sanctity Benedict XVI just decreed a new law stipulating that the Vatican will beatify the venerable in their own country and join members of the Catholic Church in proclaiming saint. This new arrangement saved thousands of Lebanese, clergies and officials from making a pilgrimage to Rome. A few years earlier, Saint Rafka, another Lebanese saint was also beatified, but in Rome, where religious dignitaries and thousands of believers made the trip to the capital of Catholics to celebrate the Beatification in the Vatican.

The service concluded with words of a nun belonging to the Sisterhood of the Cross. This nun, this woman, had the honor of presenting a relic of Abouna Yacoub to the representative of the Vatican. In her speech, she first addressed the Christian President Michel Suleiman, then the Shi'i Speaker of the House Nabih Berri, and the Sunni Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, then the Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, and her brothers and sisters. She said that Lebanon's land is a land of sanctity. My mother reiterated this sentiment upon our arrival to Lebanon. Upon hearing of our concern for our safety, she said, "Fear not, Lebanon is a sacred land, and you will be safe."

Perhaps the most important segment of the speech occurred when the sister spoke about the intersection of religion and politics. She explained that Lebanon is founded on the intersection of civilizations, and although these civilizations may clash often, these clashes ultimately create a convergence. With an increasing number of clashes occurring, the convergences become stronger. Lebanon is the smallest country in which the blood of all Lebanese was mixed up, but Lebanon is bigger than the biggest country measured by the strength of these sons and daughters, she added. Lebanon is a country of peace and love to all his children. Humanity and the coming together of the divine religions of faith and mission is Lebanon's foundation.

The celebration ended and a few minutes later, for the Muslim noon prayer we heard the muezzin from the new mosque delivering al shahaddah "la Ilaha il Allah, Muhammad rasul Allah" (None has the right to be worshiped but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God), and moved on to reciting the appropriate Qur'anic verses.

I reconnected with the Lebanon of my childhood, of my parents, of our ideal. The Lebanese had chosen a constructive coexistence between the different religious communities that form the Lebanese texture. I rejoiced

hearing that the specificity of my country is still alive. My joy was short-lived, as other disturbing thoughts emerged in my mind. Is the moderate Lebanese formula still able to preserve our common land? Is that compromised solution between moderate Christians and Muslims able to withstand radicalism? Are not we living in an era of admeasure?

My recent returns to Lebanon shook my belief in the possibility of a unified Lebanese national identity. My perspective stems from my upbringing in a family committed to the Christian faith, a family that produced a priest for many generations, and from the French education I acquired growing up in the Christian area of Beirut. Therefore, my model of modernity for intellectual, social, and political progress was the universal Occidental Western model in the Hegelian sense.

Upon my return to Lebanon in 2008, I realized that I had to reassess the understanding of the dominance of Western tradition in the Lebanon that I once knew. My understanding of the liberation and emancipation of women through a Western lens seemed obsolete in the sea of veiled women I encountered at the airport and on the way to my home to a Christian district of Beirut. I began to ask myself what identity these women were trying to project upon themselves and how this new self-perception would translate to the identity of Lebanon. Would this phenomenon change the image and identity of Lebanon? How could a veil change the identity of a country? What does this increased visibility of veiled women mean for the women themselves? Is not the wearing of a veil a sign of so-called backwardness? I decided to deepen my analysis of the concept of modernity to make sense of this change.

The concept of modernity emerged in Europe in the sixteen century as a real, progressive and necessary evolution of the mind. Philosophy in the eighteenth century surpassed theology as the dominant practice to achieve supreme knowledge and attain the truth. The history of humanity was no longer explained through revelation or religious messages, but instead, as a progression of the human mind of which revelation was a necessary stage. Revelation was neither the end of history nor the final establishment of an immutable frame in which religion gives life to humankind any longer. The modern mind embodies the fulfillment of the Enlightenment project. In his elaboration of the self-consciousness of *Geist* or Spirit, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a German philosopher (1770–1831),[1] reconciled the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the Romantic reaction to the excess of Enlightenment for the modern Western mind. He formulated arguments and laws of history to aid in understanding the necessity of the historical process. These same laws allowed a better understanding of God's mind than the clergy did. Consequently, in his attempt to comprehend history

philosophically, he secularized the Western mind and liberated men from medieval superstitions and clerical supervision. He argued that the movement of history was going in one direction and that no one could reverse it. The movement demonstrated effects of objective forces that transcend human subjectivity, as if Hegel accomplished reconciliation between the Divine and the Secular.

Hegel forged a synthesis between tensions born from the confrontation of the religious traditional spirit and the concomitant movement emerging from the discovery of the New World, and of other civilizations.

Hegel argued that the importance of religious wars resides in their "liberating" nature for the human mind in the movement of history. Similarly, his conciliate vision is respectful of both religion and the movement for development of the rational human mind. Thus, religion became only a small component of the human experience. Hegel explained religion as an instrument of progress providing the human mind with strength and rationality. For the German sociologist and political economist Max Weber,[2] religion is a response to a social need for an explanation of the creation of the world and its order. Therefore, humans insist on the process of rationalization, trying to construct an "ideal type" of society for each historical period, leading to the rule of religious hierarchies that tweaked and molded themselves to suit to each society. Because of the neocolonial contextual influence of his time, Max Weber considers religion as a truth with the presumption of a superiority of the monotheistic religions. Contrary to Protestantism, the French concept of *laïcité* in Catholic society aims at separating the religious and public spheres, confining faith and religious practice to the private sphere. The religious should not interfere in the management of the city affairs. This major difference, between Protestantism and Catholicism, reemerges today with force to accommodate the diversity of religious identities announcing the "return to the religious." Yet religion always adapts to changes of the time, acquiring sophistication and abstraction through the "process of rationalization" that characterizes the modern world. Max Weber interprets this evolution as the "disenchantment," or the secularization of the world. Religion indeed had lost its *aura* and became an observable science; above all, European society no longer perceived it as the way to absolute truth. However, this change in religion is not necessarily paralleled with an evolution of spirituality. On the contrary, and paradoxically, our contemporaries, in search of a spiritual existence, look past religious institutions and dogmas to question the rationality of organized religion.

The most prominent ideologies of the nineteenth century, socialism, Marxism, and nationalism, have marginalized religion from the political

order. Yet with this separation stems a new alienation and even a loss of identity, of roots. The sense of identity crisis is precisely the question of the profound aspiration of human beings, beginning with problems linked to Eros and Thanatos, sexuality and death, the position of men confronted with transcendence and aspiration toward the infinite; particularly the problem of recognizing humanity's relationship with a spiritual being. From anguish to suffering, men attempt to perfect their human nature and master what is finite. This problematic nature of identity involves the destiny of each human being as well as all of humanity. Yvonne Haddad argues that for "Normativist" Muslims, past authority is valid for the present and the future; "they refuse to compromise on identity." For them, religion is the central part of life and even the totality of life.[3] In the light of this loss of identity, Hannah Arendt,[4] perceiving modernity as a crisis of culture and authority following the fall of the Roman Church that had guaranteed for centuries the continuity of the Greco-Romaine, Judeo-Christian foundation, acknowledges a return to religion. Today's crisis is essentially political. The decline of the Occident consists in the decline of the Roman Trinity in the religion, the tradition, and the concomitant degradation of the specifically Roman foundations of the political sphere. Revolutions are gigantic tentative means for men to restore these foundations, to be linked again to tradition and to reestablish, through the formation of new political corps, what for many centuries gave dignity and grandeur to the daily affairs of the people. "For to live in a political realm with neither authority nor the concomitant awareness that the source of authority transcends power and those who are in power, means to be confronted anew, without the religious trust in a sacred beginning and without the protection of traditional and therefore self-evident standards of behavior, by the elementary problems of human living-together."[5]

Indeed, the course of modern history followed a trajectory that leads it away from religion in a way that will end in a world that is unequivocally secular. Following the Hegelian philosophy, societies today should be less religious than they were 30 years ago, but if we accept the analysis of Max Weber and Hannah Arendt, we are to believe that the return of the question of religion is inherent to our contemporary era. We have seen that in many parts of the world, namely, the Middle East, religion is an integral part of personal and group identities. Societies that are even more secular are characterized by the way their founding principles choose to incorporate religion. We must define modernity to include the relationship between religion and society. There are a number of models for this relationship, but which is the correct model for Lebanon, a country characterized by its unique *sigha* or political formula.

It Is Possible that Today's Modernity Is in Fact Characterized by a Return to Religion?

In contemporary writings of Islam, the rise of Western power engendered restrictions for Dar el-Islam from its broad expanse; this rise means that the Western influence would become the guiding principles and norms to Muslims on what is seen as acceptable. Although some have welcomed the influence of the West, others insist that its alien nature is unwelcome; Muslims must remain true to their heritage. Thus, the crisis of the modern world is inherent to contemporary writings, particularly the challenging of authority of Islam in believers' lives. An outpouring of new historical interpretations emerged to give a new significance to history. History is the recognition of the past and its role in helping people understand God's purpose for the present. History drives "Muslims to a dynamic participation in the destiny of the world through re-appropriation of their God-Given responsibility to guide the world in Islam."[6] In order to be part of the process, one should be actively involved in shaping the present to reflect God's purpose. For modern Muslims, the past is crucial to the present; past and present, recognition of the divine and action combine to form an integrated whole. Yvonne Haddad articulates two views of modern Muslims, Normativists and Acculturationists, advocating the need to reform the conditions for Muslims. Normativists affirm that Islam achieved its zenith in the past, and this present cultural system rejects innovation or change as inherently mistrusted. For Normativists, Islam is a living organism whose living experience of faith is being drained by alien Western culture; they complain that colonial conquests carved and divided the Muslim world. Acculturationists attempt to provide a new ethos to Islam, viewing Islam as a living organism that is suffocating in its struggle to adapt to new contemporary realities. Their standpoint on the past reflects their stance; Acculturationists see religion as one of the factors that make up the fabric of culture, whereas Normativists see culture as a product of Islam; the authority of the past is valid for the present and future. Religion is totality of life, and if Muslim can reappropriate the ideal past, they could ascend the world anew, but because missionaries and Orientalists blamed Islam for the decline of the Arab world, their views are subject to scrutiny. Orientalists argued that the Greek and Roman philosophers as well as other religions influenced *shari'a* and that the desire for territorial expansion and material gain motivated the spread if Islam. This criticism sparked the contemporary apologetic literature in the defense of Islam, emphasizing the danger of foreign attempts to attack the faith by creating a deep divide between Islam and its Muslim followers. They address all accusations and attempt to purify Islam from all mistakes and human contamination.

Muslim secularist reformers since the nineteenth century attempted to isolate the cause of the decline. They recognized that pure Islam may not be a deterrent to progress; however, they argued that Islam should be relegated to the private and individual realm. Dependence on religion and blind traditions acts as an impediment to progress; the secular nature of European society could be a cure for the decline; religion has been restrictive because the *'ulama* condemned every step of reform as a move away from Islam. Secularists believe that modernizing in the Western way—secularizing, industrializing, and acquiring Western know-how—would help Arab countries to talk off.

In 2004, a French law banned the wearing of the veil in public schools, defined as a "conspicuous sign" indicating religion affiliation. France is a secular state and the meaning of the veil appeared to challenge the French republican values of equality, liberty, and fraternity, the secular democracy, as well as the national identity. Muslims, accusing the French law to be targeted at their particular religious group and the traditions that define their culture, have challenged *la laïcité*, the French secularism. France considers Islam at odds with French republicanism, which embodies secularism and individualism. Muslim identity remains within the community, and the liberation of women is not seen as freedom from the oppression of men. Normativists refer to the cosmic dimension and women's liberation would be a rebellion against God and His order for the world. They want to protect Islam from the immorality and decadence of Western cultural patterns; their goal is to build a strong united nation of Islam committed to the religious ideology of Islam, which is seen as the path of salvation of the world. Many Muslims appear to respond favorably to the return to religion as the root of their heritage; so what is the nature of France's secularist philosophy?

The concept of French *laïcité* constitutes a major difference between France and the United States, which adopted the Anglo-Saxon concept of multiculturalism. *Laïcité* is the attempt to separate the religious and public spaces and to confine faith and religious practice to the private sphere so that it does not interfere with the state government. *Laïcité* is the separation of church and state in which the state remains officially neutral in the religious domain, particularly in the sector of public education. Since religion belongs in the private sphere, the government forbids any ostentatious exterior religious sign or symbol such as the veil, a cross, or a Jewish yarmulke in a public place.

I believe that these two concepts fit properly in their two countries. In fact, this difference is rooted in the founding principles of each model. The objective of *laïcité* as mentioned in the French constitution is to avoid any element of potential social division. The French prefer "republican

universalism" to "American multiculturalism." Not surprisingly, Americans prefer multiculturalism and interpret *laïcité* as an infringement on religious freedoms. However, French *laïcité* comes about as a reaction to the many years of Church involvement in state affairs, from a period during which religious power threatened French government. In contrast, the United States was founded to be a pluralistic society, created for those persecuted for their religious beliefs, so that they may live freely in the New World. I ask myself how Lebanon fits between these two models; it is a pluralistic and multicultural society like the United States, in which the public practices and recognizes many religions. Yet at the same time, church and state are inextricably linked, the distribution of power in government is based upon religious alignment. It uses multiculturalism as a means to accommodate the diversity of religious identities. Yet, is multiculturalism contributing to the "return to religion" as a political tool? What elements can be taken from the French and American models to create an authentically Lebanese national model?

The religious phenomenon has now taken over as the utmost concern of the world. Since September 11, 2001, the national political dialogue in the United States has shifted in order to emphasize religious values and the role of religion in peoples' lives. In France, people are now debating models of integration like American multiculturalism and *laïcité* because of the increasing prominence of Muslim immigrant communities in France, whereas before, the dialogue was primarily about economic models, like socialism. In social gatherings, people passionately discuss their thoughts for or against the wearing of the veil, and talk about terrorism and its links to Islam, or about the Judeo-Christian heritage versus the Muslim or Arab Muslim world.

Similarly, Lebanon is a stronghold of coexistence and religious conviviality that is today marked, more than ever, by religious pluralism. People define themselves as Christians and Muslims, as Maronite, Sunni, and Shi'i. Conversations revolve around interpretation of one Qur'anic Sura or another, the American Army in Iraq and Afghanistan, the emergence of the Cedar Revolution, the competition for power between Sunni and Shi'i, and, recently, the outcome of the legislative elections of June 2009.

What a change in our universe! What has caused the change that has taken place so rapidly? Thirty years ago, I seldom saw this hair accessory. One might wonder why the majority of Shi'i women are making themselves publicly visible by wearing the veil, when the Shi'i women at my time were often secular, to the point where even some became members of the communist party. Thirty years ago, mothers advised their daughters to take off the veil; today, daughters adopt the veil with or without their mothers' approval. I began to wonder if this return to religious symbols is a consequence of the pluralistic Lebanese formula, and if the Lebanese multiculturalism requires

some safeguards. Have the Shi'i of Lebanon found new forms of religious and political authority that could be legitimate and sustainable? Most of the twentieth-century philosophies in the West express a crisis of identity predicting a return to the literal interpretation of religious sources, and making the Mediterranean Orient a place of mystical pilgrimage. What do these new statements of religious identity in Lebanon mean for Christian and Muslim women?

In order to begin to address these questions, it is necessary to have a firm understanding of the differing interpretation of modernity. Tensions among these varying interpretations are responsible for the crisis of the Lebanese identity. Lebanon has always been characterized by multiculturalism—a phenomenon that has contributed to the success of the United States, but that has somehow led to the unrest in Lebanon over the past few decades. As Lebanon has evolved both intrinsically and because of the changes in the region, so too has the role of modernity and concepts of cultural identity. It seems that we are now in a period of divergence—mentalities are constantly transforming, and the final outcome remains unclear, but it is certain that women will have a key role to play in the future of their religious groups and the Lebanese nation.

Christian Perspective

Abouna is one of the priests who served in Saghbine, putting him in a prime position to observe religious life in the village and surrounding area. I asked him to describe the role of women in the local religious context, is today's modernity characterized by a return to Religion, and what are his thoughts on secularism. Here is his response:

Is Secularism Possible?

Yes, for it is happening gradually. However, the Lebanese civil society is so embedded in the prevalent religious mentality in all confessions that it will take a long time to change. There is no secularization without religion. This task would indicate the separation of politics from religion, but without breaking up with religion. Lebanon's system is closer to American secularism, which is characterized by the coexistence of many confessions and religions. In America, we call this phenomenon multiculturalism. The French called their form of secularism "laïcité," which has led to the French slogan "je suis croyant mais non pratiquant," which means "I am a believer but not a practitioner."

How about 'Assabiyya[7]?

On Assabiyya, he stated that it is strongest in Sunni and Shi'i communities, and is more powerful than the Christian 'Assabiyya. A group of Al-Qaeda and another

group of Hizbullah members are present in Bar Elias in the Bekaa; Bar Elias is on the way to Saghbine from Beirut. This is significant because while the Kataeb Party of the Christian Phalange once held this group, it is no longer represented there. The influence of 'Assabiyya is rather negative on the Lebanese population to say the least.

His account stresses that Christian institutions have always been central in the development of Christian villages. Changes caused by new economic and political conditions have not deterred religious devotion—emigration, urbanization, and the expansion of other sects' influence in areas like education have not hindered the building of new churches or the continuation of Christian education. The role of women within the Church has also become more open and active. Since the end of the Civil War, numerous accounts of people having mystical and miraculous visions of the Virgin Mary and other Saints have spread throughout the region, and many are interpreting these visions as a foretelling of the Messiah's return. Meanwhile, Lebanese Christian women are not representing their faith through their style of dress; on the contrary, Abouna attests that more and more Christian women are abandoning the traditional value of modesty.

Because of religion's profound impact on Lebanese life, it is obvious that Abouna cannot imagine the importance of religion diminishing in people's personal lives, even if Lebanon may be moving in the direction of a more secular model.

For the advent of a Lebanese civil society, common civil laws are primordial to the homogenization of the confessional seats. The advent of the Lebanese Civil society and the equality of civil laws are primordial. The predominant mood of the Arabs had been secular prior to the last two decades; the national identity includes Christians and Muslims without pointing at differences in faith, without polarization. A discourse of coexistence in which we form a community of polity in the national sense with respect and understanding without coercion is the attitude that we need.

One of the traditional defining elements of modernity is its self-referential binary of secularism and religion. The reality has become far more complicated than this binary way of thinking, and more important elements have emerged than religion as civil society has progressed, especially in a pluralistic a country as Lebanon.

CHAPTER 10

Christian-Muslim Relations, Women, and Religion

How are these developments affecting women in Saghbine and throughout other parts of the country?[1] I conducted an updated fieldwork in Lebanon in the summers from 2008 to 2010. I spent the summer of 2008 in Beirut, and from there I traveled to different cities and villages in order to examine first-hand the changes, to analyze them in terms of Western modernity as well as in terms of Islamic resurgence that occurred recently in the lives of urban and rural women there.

The Christian Perspective

Interview with Ustaz (Professor)

Ustaz has served as a high school teacher in the public school in Saghbine for many years; he stresses the importance of dialogue. I interviewed him to learn more about the changes that occurred in the status of women in the area taking into account the factor of religion.

What are the changes that occurred in Saghbine over the last twenty years?
Lebanon and Saghbine, during this period, were lacking stability—we were devastated by war and Israeli invasion and retreat. It is difficult to explain the change of what is still alive, since I live it and see it every day. I have been a high school teacher in this village for many years. In our high school, ninety percent of girls move on to higher education. In fact, the majority of our students are girls, since many young men have left to work. The lifestyle of the women of the pre-war generation, women who used to bake homemade bread, who used to wash laundry by hand, does not exist anymore. Today, the difference between a mother and her daughter is less profound than in antiquity, the wall of authority that

characterized parents in the past is on the path to disappearance. I taught two generations and am in contact with people in both. Although girls are more educated today than in previous years, there are fewer women working in fields, so few that they do not call their specialty. Neither the government, nor the universities, nor the organizations of Lebanon are preparing opportunities for the new generation. The old bourgeois elite is still in place, working for their own advantage. The elite control the reigns of government, even now, after the war.

What are the consequences for the women of Saghbine?

Life is not normal for these young girls. For example, marriage is and has always been based on the relationship between families. Emigration caused the departure of many young men. Young men come from Canada and Australia, and some from Akron, Ohio, to Saghbine in order to find a bride. For example, the graduating class of 2000 consisted of 15 girls and no men. Now, in 2008, only three of them are married—a statistic demonstrating that disproportion of men to women in this village.

Another consequence is imbued in their lifestyles—women have more freedom than ever before. If you look at the hotel and pool of Saghbine for example—girls used to stay at home and never use the swimming pool, but now, the pool area is filled with rural girls enjoying their afternoons.

In your opinion, how is the evolution taking place, based on this freedom?

The evolution is taking place in a backwards way. Children of wealthy families have more facilities and understand the principles of diplomacy in their average relationships. Girls from more humble families, for the time being, do not have this basis for social behavior; they lack guidance from their parents. But I think with time, they will learn.

In Saghbine, differences in social classes still exist. In conversation, I have heard people say, "Who are you? When did you emerge?"

Is Westernization taking place here?

Yes. It comes mainly from Beirut to here. For Christians, everything that comes from the West is completely accepted. These last decades have been characterized by separating people. Muslims and Christians organize some meetings, but in my opinion, these meetings are superficial, because Muslims believe that they are the basis of Lebanese society. However, Christians have been on this land for thousands of years, but some Muslims consider us as Dukhala'[2] *. . . For example, I am competent in the field of education, and the other teachers recognize it. However, in my meetings with directors from Mashghara (a town dominated by Shi'i), I feel that I do not have the right to talk. Our dream as Christians is to remain on our land and to live in peace with them. The Pope's ambassador came to Saghbine to encourage Christians to remain on their land. He visited the Convent*

of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Lebanon. As far as we are considered, we have good relations with Druzes, Sunnis and Shi'is, for we deal with them in commerce. However, there is no interdependence or social relationship; we have nothing against them and they have nothing against us. In the last twenty years, the immigration from Mashghara to Canada consisted of 18 percent of the village's Christians. In 1986, because of the political situation, people left Saghbine to go to Beirut, and from Beirut, many fled to Canada and Australia. Most of these fleers were members of the Kataeb (right wing Christian Phalange Party) and of the Lebanese armed forces. When Israel left in 2000, Amal and Hizbullah rose in power in Mashghara. Today, Lebanon as a sovereign, independent country does not exist. Lebanon is a democratic country characterized by multiculturalism, but our government is filled with contradictions. It is as if Lebanon is living on life support; this is not a real life. Who protects its Christian people? Patriarch Sfeir? But he kept his conservative mentality and some blame him of not having a vision for all Christians.

Unfortunately, Christians are leaving. In Palestinian territories, there are very few of them. In Iraq, they all left. There are very few in Jordan. The power of Christian Arabs is on the decline due to immigration.

What do you think of the coexistence of Saghbine with other Muslim village?

The Usuliyya or fundamentalism, does not serve coexistence and cooperation. Life in Saghbine is becoming a bit indecent and lacks unity among its villagers. Girls now frequent the town square, a venue that was previously frequented by men. These girls stay up to all hours of the night and their nights are not always innocent. In the Christian schools of Saghbine, the number of Muslim students has been decreasing lately, since Hizbullah built its own school for Muslims. The schools were formally sixty percent Christian and forty percent Muslim; the ratio today is 95 percent to 5 percent. These demographics are weakening the coexistence between Christians and Muslims. I used to know all the families of Mashghara and I visited most homes. Since 1985, everything has changed. For example, if there is a death in a Shi'i family, Christian families no longer visit the house of the deceased to offer their condolences. Every community has its own life. Previously, the businessman Albert Karam played the role of the mediator between different families and communities. Everyone respected him. When he died, only a small number of Shi'i timidly offered their condolences, although in years passed, the entire Shi'i community would have attended his funeral. The Shi'i now has their own mediators who are one of them; it is not necessary that this person be a Christian. By contrast, all Mashghara people, regardless of religion, attended the funeral of Rafik Debbs, a Christian, twenty-five years ago. The situation then allowed for this unity.

How does this change reflect on Muslim women in Mashghara?

The Shi'i Muslim woman was also influenced by the ideology of Hizbullah. My female students who formally shook hands with me now refrain from this type of greeting. The more courageous students have told me that they no longer can. These same women are now wearing a veil. 1986 was a turning point for the wearing of the veil. I do not think that they wear the veil out of respect for their faith; each girl is being paid for wearing the veil. There is no longer interaction with the Christians. However, I think that if the political, social, and religious climate changes, they will change with it.

Even the Sunni in the Qar'on village, in which violence did not occur, a moral isolation developed between the communities—as if one of the communities said to the other, "we don't need you." In Jib Janine and around it, the Muslims built castles, but these castles remain uninhabited and do not have a soul. The social life of the Christians in Jib Janine has changed; Muslims no longer walk behind the coffin at Christian funerals, as they once did. Instead, they sometimes offer their condolences by a visit to the deceased's home.

After the assassination of the late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the Sunni became more isolated. What I mean to say is that there were no more opportunities for inter-religious discussion. Although the leaders are open to the West, the followers are still extremists. Therefore, there is no change of mentalities; there are sometimes superficial political alliances, but deep inside, the mentality is scary. We cannot talk about openness in the western Bekaa. My field is education, and we have common lands—our water is shared, our markets are shared—but it seems that they want to develop their own resources and meeting places. It seems that they do not want to deal with the Christians. What is unfortunate is that social life between Christians and Muslims has very little interaction, especially when it comes to women. There used to be invitations for Christian women to celebrate Muslim holidays, but now, both sides do not accept the other's invitation. There is a rejection of the other community; everything has become politicized.

Between 1992 and 2004, we created an association for the development of education in Saghbine. We were able to fundraise from many foreign embassies, and we distributed this money to every village. However, the Muslims interpreted our charitable actions as having a political motive.

I am pessimistic about Muslim women, because they are isolating themselves geographically; they just want to be connected to those of their own religion, society, and culture. Prejudices are predominant. The nuns of Bar Elias have three cars for Muslims who attend their schools. The nuns distinguish these children as Muslim in front of the other children, which is an indirect form of discrimination. The children interact in school, but the distinction always exists to prevent certain closeness. This distinction has always existed, but is more profound today.

We need some movements of awareness. We need a pure openness admitting that their message is a divine message, although we Christians do not believe in the prophecy of Muhammad.

How do women participate in this development of religious isolationism?

When Christians talk about Saint John, we refer to him as a Prophet—in fact, he is more important than a Prophet. No woman ever gave birth to a more important Prophet than Saint John, for he prepared the way for the Lord. If the Qur'anic verses did not recognize Mary and Jesus, God knows what would have happened to us Christians. However, they do not believe in Jesus Christ as the son of God, because they cannot accept the idea that God has a son, and they consider this as heresy. Muslims always say Alla'h Akbar, which means "praise be to God," meaning that nothing resembles God in his power. In fact, there are no images of God in Islam, and Christ is supposed to be the reincarnation of God—you see how this cannot be accepted. As Christians, we have facilitated the apparition of Islam, because we were divided. The propagation of Islam took place by force; Muslims paid 50,000 rials to someone to convert to Islam—in fact, they still do. Every woman must have children in order to increase the number of Muslims. If we return to history, we see that Syria was only Christian, and the Umayyad mosque used to be the church of Saint John. If it were not for Syria and the Syrian people, Islam would not have propagated, because the Syrians guided Muslims to Indonesia and even to Russia.

I do not want to say the coexistence means Utopia, but today, we cannot talk about open dialogue between a professor and a student, especially if they belong to different religions. Again, we need a profound and efficient awareness from the elite and from Christian foundations. Maybe positivism will lead to more positivism, but certainly, continued refusal will result in complete rejection.

From an educational standpoint, there is a regression. Critical thinking is no longer appreciated and encouraged. The educational program has an influence on all students, especially women, since the majority of students are girls. Previously, our education system was modeled after the French program, with required readings from many French, Western-oriented others. Today, these readings are not mandatory.

A new government has just been formed, but it includes just one woman—the Secretary for Education, Bahia Hariri. She is the sister of the late Prime Minister Hariri. What do you think about this nomination?

This woman has already played a positive role on education. She participated in the Parliamentary educational commission. She is a dynamic person and influenced Islam in the entire region, not only in Lebanon. At that time, she was not veiled, and now, she is. She decided to wear the veil after the assassination of her

brother as a form of mourning, and she will wear it until the International Court brings to justice his assassins. She is a committed Muslim woman.

A Christian woman does not show a commitment to her religion in the same way. She can be a judge, a wife of a judge, or the wife of a cabinet member, or a cabinet member. What is important to her is a fulfilling social life—she just wants to live and be happy. When she participates in a discourse with Muslim women, the discussion is not really profound, although the Lebanese woman is capable of treating a more significant subject matter. She has many predispositions, and the existence of her intuition combined with her reason deems her more capable than a man.

Discourse

As we saw in Part I, life has changed dramatically for women in Saghbine over the past 20 years: women have more freedom and educational opportunities, but they are still limited by a lack of professional opportunities. Ustaz (professor) does an excellent job of identifying the obstacles in improving Christian-Muslim relations: a mutual distrust and an isolationist attitude within both groups are limiting interactions in schools and communities that used to foster interreligious dialogue. An environment that fails to promote critical thinking and open-mindedness prevents women from rising above these challenges.

Obviously, Arab Christians are beginning to feel threatened by the shift in demographics that is altering the historical balance of power in Lebanon. Now seen as a minority, they are consulted and included less and less in government, as we see in Ustaz's personal experience with the educational system. When combined with perceived and real resentment from other groups and economic hardship, it is no wonder Christians are being called to hold their ground to discourage abandoning their lands and forsaking their sacred spaces. Greek-Catholic Patriarch George III affirmed the important obligation of Lebanese Christians to stay and participate in a homily in 2007:

> The Providence cares for Lebanon in order for it to remain, in our Arab Orient, a cradle of civilizations and of religions . . . The Lebanese take responsibility for their own name just like in the name of all of their co-believers in the Arab world. If the Christians and the Muslims succeed at preserving conviviality in Lebanon, to live the model of unique confessional relationships, the entire Arab world would also be ensured of the success of this pluralistic model. One could also say that the success of dialogue between civilizations and of religions in the Arab Orient and in the entire world depends on the success of the Lebanese model.

The Shi'i Perspective

The 33-day conflict with Israel in 2006 boosted the presence of Hizbullah in Lebanon because of their effective response to the growing needs of the conflict-ridden Shi'i population, especially in Southern Lebanon and in the *dahiya,* the southern suburb of Beirut, where their headquarter is located. Hizbullah proved itself as much a social organization as it is a political organization. It opened schools, libraries, hospitals, public welfare programs for the needy and those who lost a family member. Moreover, the party provided help to family of martyrs, widows, and orphans. The need for a new kind of workforce to perform these additional services gave women the opportunity to participate in the functions of the organization. The role of Hizbullah women resulted in an increased responsibility and popularity of the Shi'i women in Lebanon.

Interview with Sayyid (Honorific Title)

Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah,[3] the prominent Lebanese Shi'i *marja'*, founded a large *Mabarrat* (charitable institution) in Haret Hreik, Beirut, comprising an orphanage, a mosque, a school, and a library. In July 17, 2008, I interviewed al Sayyid, an official of the Library.

Currently, what is the role of Hizbullah's women in Lebanon?
Woman is changing according to the conditions of society. There is a fundamental change in habits and traditions. Women used to cry upon the death of their sons; however, now the son is considered a martyr and a mother receives congratulations from her neighbors instead of condolences. More importantly, women now wash and dress their sons in preparation for their burial, and this change is the result of suffering endured for a long time.[4] *The conflict with Israel in Southern Lebanon destroyed our homes more than four times. They bombed our country several times, and this violence created resentment, rancor, and hatred against the Israelis. Women and their sons cannot forget nor leave the Resistance, for they do not want to live in humiliation. These women will continue to be like this until the border is protected. All these women lived in a time of war and change. Therefore, the political, social and security situation taught women to count on themselves—they do not rely on men—which elevated them to a level that resembles that of a very educated woman. Women learned patience, an important feature of Muslim women.*

Women also learned responsibility, especially after the departures of men to other countries to find work—a new phenomenon in Lebanon for all religious groups. Women fortified their personality to face different difficulties of life. In my

opinion, the liberation of women is not an irrelevant question—in fact, women have more rights than men.

What is the impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran on Lebanese women in general and on Shi'i women?
No, we are the ones who influenced the Iranians.

How?
The link between the Lebanese Shi'i from Iran is first based on our common doctrines and religious practices. There is a certain centrality in Iran because Shi'ism is the religion of the majority and the religion of the state. Since the Lebanese brought Shi'ism to Iran, we regard Iran's help as a just return from history.[5]

The resilience of women and their willingness to face problems is stronger in Lebanon than in Iran. For example, if Lebanese women are forced to live without water or electricity, they will find a way to survive, whereas Iranian women do not have these problems. Not only the Shi'i, but also all communities in Lebanon suffered from war. We have a different political situation here. We are the ones who sent Shi'ism to Iran from the 'Amel Mountains long time before the Iranian revolution. However, the Islamic Revolution contributed to the political situation in Lebanon.

Now, the Islamic Revolution has become a global issue. Historically, there has been resistance. For example, Imam Hussein showed us the highest model of martyrdom and sacrifice. Mothers now equate the sacrifices of their sons to that of Hussein; they believe that their martyred sons are on the same level as his example. Sayyid Mussa El-Sadr founded a political organization called Amal, or Hope, a movement to help the disinherited from all religious groups liberate themselves from poverty in all of Lebanon. The military branch of this political movement (also called Amal) was founded as a reaction to the Israeli occupation. Sayyid Musa El-Sadr's slogan became "Assilah Zinat Al-Rijal"—"Weapons are man's decoration." He added that he was against the idea of Tawtin—the naturalization of the Palestinian refugees as citizens of Lebanon. Outsiders interpreted these two slogans to mean that we are terrorists. However, originally, these movements were the direct cause of the occupation of Lebanon. The Jews nationalized their religion and refused coexistence with other religions.

How do Shi'i women participate in the evolution of their country?
In general, women can participate in all aspects of life by elevating their level of education. This education comes in addition to the characteristics of women that we value, such as patience during the struggle that Lebanon is currently facing. Today, there are no differences between young men and women. I have four children—two girls and two boys. The four of them are Ph.D. students. There

is really no difference between them. There is no gender-based discrimination for seeking higher-level education in our religion. The Shi'i people, through education, entered the world of technology and now use it very well. This evolution is also due to the father, who accepted that his daughters be educated. A girl can learn any subject . . . she is responsible being and works in difficult times, and men admit the role of women in affairs of life. Religion is not against this development. Through the Islamic civilization, the Umayyad appropriated Islam under their own interpretation of the doctrines. They incorporated Greek logic and reasoning into their doctrinal interpretations. However, the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, founder of the Ja'fari sect[6] *of Shi'ism, gave religious and jurisprudential roots to Islam. He propagated the Islamic civilization through his own interpretation and claimed, "Ask for knowledge, even in China," and "the seeker of knowledge has guardian angels protecting him." When his sect took Christian prisoners, he would force the outsiders to educate three Muslims, and then release them. This anecdote demonstrates the importance of education in the Islamic tradition.*

The Prophet Mohammad placed emphasis on reading and research in order to find the best solutions to the problems facing his contemporary society. He awakened dormant societies in the Arab world. Unfortunately, his version of Islam was misconstrued. In addition to woman's responsibility to educate herself, she has the responsibility to work outside of the house, just like men, since Lebanon gave women the opportunity to evolve. She participates in the evolution of society. Although society has liberated women from her role as simply a domestic, these circumstances come at a high cost to society, for enemies surround Lebanon. The Shi'i woman can work in a bank, can be a doctor—she works everywhere. However, her relationship with God does not concern anyone else, and remains in the private domain.

At the mosque next to this library [founded by Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah], the Sayyid[7] *gives speeches that are open to all sects. The mosque is not only a place for prayer, but it also facilitates education and lectures. It boasts a section designated for women. The Sayyid discusses and analyses problems faced by the faithful in a cultural light. The Cultural Islamic Center invites doctors and scientists from all faiths, including Christians, to a dialogue without constraints.*

What Is the Meaning of Hijab?[8]

It is a concept of tasatur*, which in Arabic, could mean, to cover, to hide, disguise, or to protect. We also took the concept from the Virgin Mary, who was also veiled. The concept of the veil existed even before Islam's inception during the Roman times. The veil was worn at the time of our Prophet and has become part of the Islamic principle. The veil is now a social symbol that conceals the beauty of the woman in order to avoid temptation.*

Do you have specific educational, political, or social programs for women in Lebanon?

We do not have any particular programs in Lebanon. When the woman has all the capacities to work, she has the same status as a man. Sometimes, she even rises above him. Through this library, we discovered how capable our women are. Any Shi'i woman is very open and capable if she is in an atmosphere that is conducive to education. She can discover other cultures, and still protect her own culture; she interacts with the other, accepts it and benefits from it. We are also capable of forgiving the other.

In most of our work, especially that which has an educational aspect, girls play the most important role. They attend educational seminars in which they excel. In the workforce, women are taking the positions that men used to fill. However, our women expect to earn less money.

I saw many veiled girls at the Jesuit University researching in the University Library. When I was a young girl in Catholic school, I also had Muslim classmates who were not veiled. Are there many Christian students in Muslim schools?

Yes, although the percentage is very low. The war forced these children to attend our schools. However, the percentage of Muslim girls going to Christian schools and universities is by far higher. Our schools have improved tremendously and are equal to Christian schools. In the baccalaureate program, the top three students were from a Shi'i high school.

What do you think of the influence of the Christian Arab?

The Christian Arabs went to Egypt and asked for "Arabization." They participated in the Arab Renaissance in the nineteenth century. Christians were the first people (along with the Muslims) to protect the Arabic language. Until today, the Christians are just as proficient as Muslims in the Arabic language, and are capable of the same assimilation of the Arabic language.

Do you admit that Arab Christianity contributed to the evolution of the country?

Certainly, because Christians are closer to the West than we are, their relationship started in the sixteenth century. They enriched the country. This is natural and we admit it.

What is being adopted now—the American or the European Curriculum in schools?

Europe is opening up to the Arab culture. Currently in Lebanon, the influence of the American curriculum is stronger, since the European curriculum is fading. Now Muslims are learning to use instruments—a western phenomenon. Even the fundamentalists are using the organ or the piano for reciting Islamic hymns.

We use western tools as long as they are in concordance with our interests—we do not tax these means as evil. We are participating in globalization.

Is the process of globalization helping women to reaffirm their Islamic identity?

The development of woman is linked to her society. The Gulf society did not give woman a role. Last year, women earned a right to vote. In Saudi Arabia, women still do not drive. Kuwait has given women civil rights, but women have yet to earn political rights. Iran is the first Arab country in terms of women's rights, for the deputy to the President is a woman. In Lebanon, we benefit from more evolution than any other Arab country. Our women have freedom and respect. In the same family, there are two sisters, where one may wear a veil and the other does not—she is free to do as she pleases. Lebanon does not have honor killings that exist in Jordan. In Jordan, if a brother senses any sense of guilt in his sister, he is free to kill her. In 90% of these cases, the girls are innocent.

The agreement between the "National Freedom Movement" party of Michel Aoun[9] *and Hizbullah released the anxiety and apprehension between the two bodies. During the July 2006 war, we were pleased to see that Christian women were cooking and caring for Shi'i victims of war. This collaboration casts a gleam of hope for the future cooperation of both sides. In the time of danger, we came together. At the American University of Science and Technology that is in the heart of Ashrafieh, 70 percent of the students are Muslim.*

I have a friend in Cleveland who refuses to marry her daughter to an American because he is Christian. In this case, the Christian husband would have to convert to Islam. Why?

This is true. A man who marries a Muslim girl must convert to Islam. However, a non-Muslim woman who marries a Muslim man can keep her religious identity. A Christian does not admit the prophecy of Mohammad, but we admit the prophecy of Issa (Jesus) and Moses. Therefore, elements of Christianity and Judaism are accepted by our religion, although the former and the latter do not accept some elements of our religion. In marriage, man's power is stronger than that of a woman. When a Muslim man gets married, women are not required to become Muslim because the man's religion supersedes women convictions. However, a man who married a Muslim girl is obligated by religion to convert to Islam.

Can you please expound on the tradition of the Iftar*[10]*?

The objective of the Iftar is to feed the orphans. In Lebanon, orphans used to sell Chiklets. Now, the idea of social equilibrium—not exactly charity—is developing in Islam. It dictates that every Muslim should take charge of one orphan. Simultaneously, this concept of thaqafa[11] *is seen throughout Lebanon, as most foundations support orphans.*

Do you have any relations with the Foundation for the Handicapped in Beit Shabab, a Catholic organization?

Muslims participate in it by the thousands. Here, the Christians and Muslims have strong religious ties, since many Muslims are sent to this institution and Christians are caring for them.

What do you think of the coexistence of Christians and Muslims in Lebanon?

No community can eliminate the other. If we continue to live together, side by side, Lebanon will become the most developed country in the world—just give Lebanon the opportunity! We have to live together! Lebanon is characterized by our national unity.

Some Muslim women are making solemn vows to Christian saints—for example, many Muslim women have promised Saint Charbel that if he gave them a son, they would have their boy wear his robe for three months. This demonstrates the unity among Christians and Muslims.

Another example: my daughter studies in Canada, where she has a Christian friend. They decided that if ever my daughter's friend attends our mosque, she would wear her cross, whereas my daughter would attend her mass wearing her veil. The Lebanese living overseas do not take into account Ta'ifiya (communitarianism)—what is paramount is that we are all Lebanese.

The path of Bin Laden damaged Islam, and Islam is really innocent of Bin Laden's atrocities. September 11 does not help Muslims; it painted the ugliest picture of our beloved faith, and we now have to fight this picture. Every veiled woman is not Bin Laden; some Muslims are really suffering from Bin Laden's actions.

I've heard about the Mahdi[12] ***fighting along with the Shi'i during the 2006 war. Can you tell me about this?***

In Bint Jbeil, a tree was cut down, and in the same area, 23 young men died as martyrs. When the villagers set out to replace the tree, they found 23 green branches growing around the tree stump. It was a miracle.

In the Shi'i religion, we are still waiting for al-Mahdi. His coming will propagate peace on earth and the disappearance of oppression. The idea of a savior is becoming more popular, since so many Lebanese mothers in the south of Lebanon live in poverty and desolation. They attach to the idea of a divine force coming to relieve them of their current despair. All faithful believe in these divine forces. However, although we accept the possibility of divine intervention, we need to be realistic and face our problems by refusing oppression and humiliation. We cannot sit and wait in inaction while expecting divine forces to work for us. We must live our reality and spread justice; otherwise, ignorance will invade us. Israel is an enormous power, but we know that in the end, God will give victory to his people.

Clearly, Sayyid interprets the role of Shi'i women primarily within the context of Hizbullah's struggle against Israel. While there are many similarities with the other interviewees' opinions in terms of women's opportunities in education and their capabilities to perform as well as men in the workplace, Sayyid emphasizes the Shi'i woman's position within the Resistance movement as the mothers of combatants—a source of pride and empowerment for them. The conflict with Israel has also made Shi'i women strong and self-reliant, and the absence of men in traditionally masculine occupations due to emigration and war has obligated women to be proactive and to work outside the domestic sphere. In Sayyid's interpretation of Shi'ism, women are still "weaker" than men in some ways: their religious convictions are "superseded" by those of their husbands, they accept earning lower wages than men, and they cover themselves to avoid being a temptation for men.

Sayyid acknowledges the legacy of Christian Arabs in Lebanon. He also points out that Shi'i are working to educate themselves and adopt new tools so that they can attain a similar level of development, without compromising their identity or beliefs. In his opinion, positive relations between religious sects are not only necessary for Lebanon, but also advantageous for national development and for the evolution of women. Furthermore, he cites many examples of cooperation that may be overlooked in other analyses of Muslim-Christian relations: collaboration on social projects and disaster relief efforts, opportunities for dialogue in mosques and cultural centers, and student interactions in institutions of higher learning.

Alternative Modernities

The future of modernity has two faces; one that is held by the Muslims of Lebanon and the other by the Christians. The Muslim vision of modernity includes a return to traditional roles and expressions of faith, a vintage approach to rejuvenating society. The Christian approach views modernity in an adaptive context, in which integration is favored over insularity. Certain Muslims hold on to secularism, although under the cultural influence from the global Islamist resurgence, a secular Muslim society is diminishing in favor of a state that adheres more closely to religious ideals as set forth by the Qur'an. The impact of this divergence from secularism was apparent to me during the interview I conducted with the group of women at Hizbullah headquarters; I remarked by the collectivist standpoint they have adapted, which inhibits them from engaging in criticism of either their own group or others. By contrast, the remaining Christian society views constructive critique, both of itself and of other groups, to be essential in order to promote progress and stimulate growth.

CHAPTER 11

Lebanese Women in All Their Diversity: Convergence and Divergence

How can one portray Lebanese women in all their diversity? Not all women wear the veil, and many allegations exist that all Arab women are the same. Westerners often believe that all Arab women are veiled, illiterate, secluded, demure, oppressed, and belong to conservative sects of Islam. While there is an unbalanced equilibrium between men and women in the Middle East, women always know how to bounce back from the trials in their lives and not become downtrodden and miserable. Each woman has the potential to actualize her own life according to her upbringing and dreams and hopes to inspire others. The world is beginning to learn that there are both Christians and Muslims in the Arab world, and within those two groups, a great amount of diversity exists in women, but their commonalities are what makes the women of this region such fierce samples of a strong culture.

Beirut—Poem by Nadia Tueni

This poem was read on March 14, 2006, at the demonstrations of the Cedar Revolution to stand for civilizations, nonviolence, and appreciating the rich history of Lebanon and its role in the Middle East, despite the imminent chaos. This poem, written by Nadia Tueni, mother of Gebran Tueni assassinated in December 12, 2005,[1] is now symbolic of the Cedar Revolution and is read frequently in reference to those times.

Beirut
A thousand times dead, a thousand times relived . . .
In Beirut each idea resides in a house

In Beirut each word is an ostentation.
In Beirut one unloads thoughts and caravans,
pirates of spirit, priestesses or sultans,
So be it religious, or sorceress
be it both, be it pivot
of the sea door or of the Levant's gates
be it bloody or water blessed
be it innocent or murderous
In being Phoenician, Arab or on a relaying way
In being Levantine with multiple vertigos
like these unfamiliar flowers fragile on their stems
Beirut is the last sanctuary in the Orient
Where man can always dress himself in robes of light.[2]

Nadia Tueni is a perfect example of the diversity of Lebanese woman. Her father, a Druze diplomat and writer, Mohamad Ali Hamadé, married a European Christian woman, and Nadia was raised between the two dominant religions in Lebanon and also between two languages. She became a poet at the convergence of two cultures: Western and Middle Eastern. She married a Greek Orthodox man, a journalist, Congressman of Beirut, and Ambassador of Lebanon to the United Nations from 1977 to 1982, Ghassan Tueni. Ghassan was the son of the founder of the *An-Nahar* newspaper, the most widely distributed Arabic daily newspaper, among the few that valued freedom of speech. *An-Nahar* remains the most influential newspaper in the Middle East. Their son, Gebran, was also a well-known writer for *An-Nahar* and often said, "I am half Muslim half Christian in a country where one's religion was sometimes more important than one's nationality."

Having ties to many different confessions helped Nadia represent the unique diversity of Lebanon, instead of insular separations of religious groups. From her unique standpoint, she was able to be a progressive, open, and welcoming force in the Lebanese literary world. She won numerous awards for her writing, including being accepted by l'Académie Française and went on to receive their Order of La Pléiade and the Prix Said Akl in Lebanon. Furthermore, she had a traditional upbringing but challenged roles as she grew up.

Traditional Women in the Face of Modernity: Still Successful

Rural Life

B. C. was a rural agriculturalist, born around 1910 in Saghbine. She spent her life working the land, continuously selling her crops in addition to taking on her household responsibilities, which were always her pleasure. Her

relationship with the land marked her physiology; she could no longer stand still, and she walked with her shoulders hunched or with her back completely inversed. This explains that her world is essentially determined by the land, that is, by planting and harvesting, and by the heavens, that is, by thanking the Creator.

She is an example of a truly ambitious woman. Her parents died during World War I, and from that point, at a very young age, it became necessary for her to work for the family, which gave her strength, vigor, and, above all, self-determination. "My only joy and my only satisfaction is to see my children," she told me. Married young, she had ten children, five of whom died during childbirth and the life of one daughter ended after an olive harvest. In 1982, when this interview took place, in spite of her old age, she continued to work the land, and she still had a cow, and continued to sell fresh milk and traditionally prepared cheese that she made herself. Completely self-sufficient, even while struggling with physical limitations and tragedy, B. C. exemplifies the inherent strength of Lebanese women.

In the City

Laura: The Perfect Lady of the House

Laura[3] is an urban woman from Saghbine, born around 1920. She is the example of the perfect Lady of the House. She completed her childhood and primary studies in Zahlé at the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts (*Soeurs de Saints-Coeurs*), and completed her secondary studies at the college of Antoura, a boarding school near Beirut. In 1932, she returned to Zahlé following the death of her father and devoted herself to the care of the home and her brothers. During that time, she would meet at the parish as a member of the Legion of Mary. Once a month, she organized receptions at her home. She invited young girls her age, and sometimes, young men as well. She attended the majority of invitations extended to her in Zahlé, while reading novels, plays and reviews for leisure.

In 1937, her family moved to Beirut, where Laura lived like she did in Zahlé, where her acquaintances would follow her every move. She went out to the theater to see comedies and tragedies and to the Casino of Lebanon where her brother worked. During the summer, with her neighborhood, she went swimming. She also returned to the village where nights with her friends often became walks to *nabeh el-khraïzet*,[4] eating and walking, but always in the presence of her brothers.

In 1941, she married a lieutenant. They had to ask for an exemption from patriarch because her deceased father was the godfather of her fiancé.

A grand wedding in Beirut reunited the whole village that made the trip for the occasion and their acquaintances from the city.

In 1942, their first son was born, followed by two others three and ten years later. Her husband was absent from the birth of his first son. He was sent by the army in the Syrian campaign as a military topographer to draw the new borders of Syria, which had recently been amputated from the city of Alexandrite and its surrounding areas. In spite of the absence of her husband, she assumed all the work of her household and the responsibilities of her child. The couple lived comfortably; they had the same mentality, were generous, constantly received and attended important invitations because of the assignments given to her husband. He obtained the command of the Lebanese Artillery during the independence of the Lebanese army . . . the more the situation progressed, the more the house became open.

In 1968, when her husband was stationed in Tripoli, she had to open a new home and establish new contacts with personalities of Northern Lebanon. Then in 1970, he was appointed to Washington as a military attaché. They lived in the Lebanese way more than adapting to an American life and invitations followed through.

In 1971, he retired for a few months and then was appointed Commander in Chief of the Lebanese Army. Then, she had to assume more duties of a larger house. Her sociability was at its height during holidays; she visited nearly all of the wives of the other officers.

This woman is the perfect lady of a house, as an officer's wife and as the mother of a model family; with a reputation for honesty, benevolence, and extreme generosity. Today, her husband is retired, but this does not stop her from receiving important people. They still visit the United States and France where they stay with their two sons. Their third son is an officer in the navy, commander of the Port of Jounieh, the only port that remains in the hands of the Lebanese Army.

I wrote this portrait in 1982. In the meantime, her older son has become the congressional representative of the West Bekaa, her second son reached the highest level in the army, then retired to be nominated the director of the Lebanese custom. The youngest son spent years in Dallas and later worked for many years in Cairo for US Agency for International Development (USAID). Unfortunately, she and her husband recently passed away.

Outside of these exceptional situations, we should ask if, beyond this diversity of concepts of woman, one could release Lebanese particulars for an anthropologic reflection:

Original traits of Lebanese women emerge from their human behavior that remains traditionalistic. Among traditions that women did not give up is hospitality. This virtue remains from a more patriarchal time. The hospitality

that astonishes and causes outsiders' admiration and merits recognition, and which might encounter disdain in other countries, has been preserved in the village today, fortunately. The new roads and the media have shattered the framework linked to nature, but the sense of hospitality remains alive and expected. For author Jean Corbon, "We are here less in a civilization of domination, more in a welcoming one. The greatness and the vulnerability of our region that comes partially from this vocation that comes from the land: being in open relationships rather than in a dominant autarky."[5]

To establish oneself in the city is synonymous with civilization. Urbanization has created new models for relationships within couples and families; the most difficult aspect for a family in transition and for every new national modernization project is the condition of women and all the nuances we foresee. The actual trend is still struggling with modernism. Modernism? Yes! But women are still questioning the framework of ancestral traditions, and without any disdain for everything that is Lebanese. They ameliorate their edifice's facade, bring comfortable accommodations, but without modifying the solid foundation. "We, the women, our walls are good too," women say. Lebanese know that civilization is neither a matter of science, nor a question of scientific application. They do not believe in importing a civilization as it exists in another country. "There are fatalities of race, climate, physiological and psychological heredities against which everything collapses."[6] For that matter, it is a challenge to conform modern conveniences to the most ancient and vulnerable customs.

The importance of group cohesion allows adding another aspect of the urban phenomenon. Inhabitants of large cities are not yet urban residents but rather urbanized rural people. As in the village, they gather insularly in districts. Consequently, their behavior is the same as in the village with their health, human warmth, solidarity, and most importantly their attachment to traditional behavior. Thus, the common cultural basis of all Lebanese, whether Christians or Muslims, comes from the difficult promotion of the woman, the precarious independence of newly married homes, the freedom of professional orientation or adolescents' vocation, and the sense of honor and values of prestige that are still predominant.

However, as pragmatic as we are with our sense of the immediate, there is something more profound, more humane, and more divine at the same time; it is the attachment to religion. The sense of the hereafter lives in the Lebanese. "Its vast range of values might sometimes divert them, but does not blow out their thirsts of the transcendent."[7] From here, the preeminence of values of intuition rises up over the positive facts and the value of authority triumphs over critical standards. Faith is nothing more than this intuition resting on an authority.

But in Lebanon, the religion that is more preserved in rural areas has a more faithful companion in this passion of freedom, which was and remains, in the face of diversity of confessions, an element of unity. Sincere religion, profound religion—religion is more profound and more sincere for the peasant. From here comes the devotion of women, and particularly the rural woman, who experiences a real devotion without wavering. The Lebanese people who preserve the religious faith, even sometimes mixed with superstitions, have more of a future than a dissolute society, where indifference and incredulity have dried up the hearts of the people.

Georgina: The Paradigm of Devotion

Georgina[8] belongs to the urban bourgeoisie. Her father, originally from Bikfaya, a large picturesque mountain village, just east of Beirut, left Lebanon on the eve of the outbreak of World War I. Besides the harsh times that the Lebanese endured under the Ottoman Empire, a plague of grasshoppers ravaged Lebanon, leaving almost no crops for the population's survival. Moreover, his mother died and his father remarried. Feeling hopeless on all fronts, he envisaged emigration and embarked on an unknown journey. He sailed from the Lebanese shore to wherever the boat was going. The boat landed in Marseille, and from there he embarked on another ship that traveled south on the Atlantic Ocean and reached the Senegalese shore. From there, he began a tough life in a foreign place but was soon able to adapt and courageously made his way through in a foreign continent. From beginnings as a simple fabric merchant, he founded a business that developed quickly and reached many different African countries. He began importing fabric from Manchester, England, to sell it in the African countries. His business expanded to the Ivory Coast and to French Guinea. He also met a Lebanese emigrant in Guinea, Ramza, and married her. Ramza's brothers were prominent in the Lebanese community. One brother represented Guinea at the United Nations at the time, and her other brother was honorably decorated and solemnly titled by the pope as a representative of the Saint Sepulcher. This decoration is given to those who have achieved highest humane act of charity. The couple had four children and Georgina was the third child.

Georgina was born in Senegal in 1928. Senegal was a French colony at the time, and she grew up in a loving family environment. Following her early childhood in Africa, she and her brother and sisters were sent to boarding schools in Lebanon. Her brother attended the Jesuit School for Boys in Beirut and Georgina and her sisters attended the School of the Sisters of the Holy Family in Bikfaya. A driven student, she accomplished her studies successfully and attained the Baccalaureate level—an accomplishment for a woman

at that time in Lebanon. The nuns who ran the school instilled in her a profound sense of a transcendental devotion and a discipline in the practice of her faith, and to this day, Georgina attends services daily. She thought about her religious vocation and even considered becoming a nun, but ultimately opted for a civil life with an emphasis on religion as well as on social and charitable work.

She learned to play the piano during her childhood education, and afterward she played the organ in churches for Sunday masses. She enjoyed reading books of saints and memorizing French and Arabic poems. She went with her friends to the movie theater and went wherever the Sisters took her on field trips in Lebanon. Her parents came every summer from Africa to check on their children.

When the four children reached high school, their mother came to Lebanon and they were able to live together as a family, an experience they had been missing since childhood. Their father had to stay in Africa most of the time to manage his commerce but often came to Lebanon to spend time with them. During one of his visits, he decided to pull his son Melhem out of high school and take him back to Africa; he needed help and wanted to show his son how to become a man. Melhem, a fine student, resisted his father's decision; he deeply wanted to finish his remaining two high school years, but ultimately had to submit to his father's decision. This departure impacted him for the rest of his life. His love for reading and learning continued throughout his life, never failing to nurture his mind whenever possible.

Georgina, at that point, lived in a beautiful house with breathtaking scenery overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, with the smell of pine trees in the center of Bikfaya, and enjoyed being with her mother and sisters. The preparation for the Festival of Flowers occupied her for an entire month in the summer, decorating vehicles with thousands of colorful flowers and fruits. After graduation, she decided to move to Paris since her brother was splitting his time between Africa and Paris. She enjoyed life in Paris and took advantage of what the city had to offer. She attended art history courses at the Louvre and was fascinated by the way in which professors taught their subject on sight. She also drew and painted for pleasure. Outside art, she took primary care and later more advanced nursing courses. Although in a traditional way, she enjoyed life in the City of Light, the two years that Georgina spent in Paris had a profound impact on her, and I believe that she had hard time readjusting to life and society in Lebanon upon her return. Against her will, one day she had to comply with her family's decision that she was to return to Lebanon, get married, and settle down. The mentality of the time was "What would life in Paris grant her? Isn't marriage the ultimate goal for a young woman?"

In 1952, she married a handsome lawyer, Farid, from Saghbine. Ambitious and drawn to politics, he looked for a suitable and dignified wife and Georgina's father's wealth probably made her a more desirable candidate. Besides his European features, Farid had a warm voice and Georgina enjoyed listening to him sings religious canticles. The wedding was a large Maronite religious ceremony in Bikfaya at Mar 'Abda church, for which many people assembled from Bikfaya, Saghbine, Baalbeck, and Beirut. Besides Farid's family, a large number of the Saghbine population made the two-hour trip to attend the ceremony. Political supporters from other areas, particularly a Shi'i group, from the Dandach family and their constituencies from Baalbeck, as well as members of the Bar and judges from Beirut attended the wedding. After the solemn religious ceremony, while the bride and groom exited the church, the Dandach members fired a submachine gun as a sign of honor to Farid and in celebration of the wedding, which scared the inhabitants of Bikfaya, not yet used to hearing gunfire, at least in 1952, many years before the civil war.

The couple went then to Saghbine where a spectacular banquet and celebration lasted for an entire week. The event was the occasion to gather all the inhabitants of the entire Bekaa Valley, East and West, Christians and Muslims. Behind the scenes, the inhabitants of the women's village were the ones who made the grandiose gathering possible; they continuously cooked and served elaborately prepared dishes to the guests arriving in groups for the entire week.

Georgina and Farid began a rather promising life in Beirut. Their first son was born in 1953, and later one daughter and two boys were born. For the christening of her oldest son Boutros, 12 bishops from different parts of Lebanon from the Maronite and Melkite rites participated in the ceremony. Boutros, after all, was the grandson of a notable of Saghbine whose diplomacy and savoir faire allowed him to gain the Ottoman governor *Wali el Sham's* trust and avoid catastrophes and even saved compatriots from being hanged. From a fabulous beginning and happy childhood, the seventies brought unforeseen suffering. From a good-looking young man by Hollywood standards, a skin problem expanded and ravaged Boutros's appearance. Although French doctors from the St. Louis Hospital in Paris gave him a couple years, Boutros's suffering lasted until 2005 when he passed away. Georgina always comforted him and never failed to provide him with whatever he needed with pleasure and a smile. She accepted his death with dignity and courage. His picture is on her night table; she prays for his soul when she wakes up in the morning and in the evening before she goes to sleep.

Georgina gave birth to her youngest son on December 24 at midnight. She still recounts the event, identifying with Mary who gave birth to Jesus.

Her son came into the world while she could hear the church bells ringing; Georgina considered it a holy sign from the heavens. The extended family gathered after midnight mass at the hospital where she gave birth. Joy and congratulations filled her heart.

Her marital life was not perfect; Farid's appearance attracted other women and he sometimes cheated on her. Even though she was suffering in this aspect of her life, watching other women never leave her husband alone, she continued to take care of her children and her home so that life would be as normal as possible. After all, divorce was not an option for her like for other women of her generation. Instead of complaining about her husband's infidelity, she channeled her energy toward social work and helping those who were less privileged than she was.

Driven by an innate sense of mission, she looked for ways to help others. Realizing that Saghbine and the surrounding areas lacked medical care, she envisioned a way to start a dispensary clinic in order to help impoverished people. Social security or a public health center did not exist at the time. Building on the medical knowledge she acquired while in Paris, she asked the priest to provide her with a room in the *Qontoch*,[9] which he did with pleasure and transformed it to a modest dispensary furnished with one table, two chairs, and a few shelves of medication. She contacted one of the rare medical doctors in the area to have him complete a weekly visit hour, which he did. The *Mouvement Social,* an organization founded by Monsignor Gregoire Haddad, provided the dispensary with medicine; Georgina actively developed her project through fundraising events that she organized in Beirut.

To ensure a daily medical service, she entrusted the dispensary to the Sisters of the Sacred family. The charge was then delegated to Sister Eugedia who until this day continues overseeing these services. Her project proved to be successful in helping not only Saghbine inhabitants, but also all of the surrounding Muslim and Christian areas. Financial help poured in from emigrants and locals. In October 2009, the Saghbiniote organized a festival to honor her vision and accomplishment as well as those of Sister Eugedia and Doctor Safi who also devoted their lives to this noble vocation. At age 86, Georgina stood up and made a speech recounting the sequence of events that led to the undertaking of this lifelong project and expressing her thanks for their thoughtfulness and appreciation.

Her sense of mission is also manifested through her volunteer work for Saint Vincent Charity, work that she began during the first years of the civil war. Her work consists of being in contact with displaced needy families, fleeing bombardment in Beirut. She assesses their needs and makes sure that help is appropriately provided on a monthly basis. Georgina has a great capacity to listen to other women recounting their harsh conditions and with genuine

love she gives her humble advice and uses her creativity to find ways through her connections to make a difference where and when needed with great joy.

Caramel: Warm and Optimistic Chronicles Depicting Modernity Tainted with Traditions

Despite recent regional influence and the memory of the hideous war, Lebanese woman continue more than ever before to be characterized as Dolce Vita for their luxurious and self-indulgent lifestyles, particularly after experiencing the cruel years that the civil war inflicted on them. Socialites and hard workers at the same time, they personify a subtle mix of tradition and modernity, and their creation continues to astonish.

The hardworking and creative film director Nadine Labaki was born in Baabdat. She studied media at the Jesuit university, Saint Joseph University, in Beirut. She later participated in a televised Lebanese talent show *Studio el Fan,* similar to American Idol, which aired in the early nineties. She directed music videos for Carla, an amateur singer, who became a famed presenter on the *Rotana* music channel. The videos she directed, such as *Akhasmak Ah* for Nancy Ajram featuring an Egyptian woman serving and entertaining male customers in an Egyptian café, made her a controversial but popular figure in the world of music media. Although contentious, Nadine justified the character as a "powerful and attractive female figure." The next three music videos she developed for Nancy Ajram, *Ya Salaam* portraying the life of a sad star, *Lawn* '*Uyunak* portraying a fantasy wedding, and *Inta Eih* recounting a heartbreaking drama, revealed Nancy's singing and acting talent. Because of the enormous popularity the videos received, they won honors for best music videos and both women, Nadine and Nancy, became increasingly successful.

Nadine explored acting in the movie *Bosta* (bus) in which her acting talent came forward and contributed to the success of the movie. In the film, through Nadine's character, along with former schoolmates who went through years of war, they aimed to introduce a new blend of music with *dabkeh*, the traditional folkloric Lebanese dance. They pioneered a new genre of *dabkeh* coupled with a techno beat that they performed in their native villages through festival events. *Bosta* exemplified a way for the young people to bring a modern turn to the past and reestablish contact with the multiple identities of the country. Interestingly, the film relates the change of *dabkeh* to the evolution and change of mentalities. Traditionalists in the film reacted to their innovation referring back to the Lebanese heritage and indicating that without roots, this style of music and dance is nothing, and condemned this new type of *dabkeh* for distorting well-seeded traditions. Life, dreams, and hope ultimately prevail in the film.

In 2007, Nadine's talent culminated in her feature-length directorial debut *Caramel,* in which she also acted as one of the main characters. Caramel is an Oriental dough, soft and malleable, sweet and sour. Nadine puts forward a feminine vision of the Lebanese society, and the idea that sweet and bitter implies the difficulties that five women encounter in their daily life. Nadine presents life vignettes, sometimes sad, sometimes happy, of five Lebanese women at different ages and religious confessions who interact in a beauty salon in Beirut. This feminine universe allows all sorts of confidence, all emotions; each character represents an aspect of Lebanese society in its modernity as well as in its traditions. In a sensual and chaste atmosphere, the compelling characters, through charm and finesse, challenge the condition of women in Lebanon. Love, men, sex, beauty, and marriage are the principal themes discussed with a common joie de vivre and omnipresent humor. Layale is trapped in a bland relationship because the older man she truly loves is married. The older man causes her pain, the relationship progresses, and she tries to distance herself from the situation. Nisrine is concerned about not being a virgin for her marriage; she struggles to find ways not to shame her family with her secret. Jamale is divorced and takes care of her two children, and she is obsessed with the realities of aging and the prospect of having plastic surgery. Rima, quiet and reserved, does not show any interest in love until she is attracted to a woman, Siham, and she then wonders about homosexuality and the nature of their relationship, which needs to remain a secret.

Each of them has internal struggles and they battle daily with hopes to surmount them. For instance, Rose, a tailor, sews in a store next to the salon. At age 55, she turns down a romantic relationship because she has already devoted her life to the care of her older sister, who is mentally unbalanced. A pivotal scene suggests a devoted religious life when Rose and her sister are saying their evening prayer reciting the rosary. In prayer, they transcend their daily struggles and on an equal level, they worship God, the creator, and thank him for his blessings.

Although this cinematically beautiful film was produced in modern Beirut, undertones of past traditions persist. One scene shows Nisrine and her fiancé talking in their parked car when a police officer comes to question them about their status and what they are doing at night. They tell the truth, saying that they are engaged, but the police officer brings them down to the police station, since they are not married.

The shooting took place in 2006 during a time of independence and hope, at least before the 33-day war, when Beirut was bombarded again. Although Nadine does not explicitly mention the war, its memory remains the main background, conditioning a strong desire for life and excessive hopes. Despite the political and military context, *Caramel* is a hymn to Beirut, highlighting

an evolving society, torn between tradition and modernity. While *Caramel* brings to light future hopes, it also points to the fragility of the condition of women in Lebanese societies, while withstanding the bitter realities of daily life. While social pressures do not constrain the women in the film, these pressures do exist, but in the face of these obstacles, the women triumph because of their inner strength, and the sisterhood that exists between these five women prevails.

Expressions of Lebanese Women: *Hikayat* (Stories) of Lebanese Women Writers and Commonalities between East and West

I had the blissful opportunity to teach a course I developed, titled Modern Arab Thought, at Oberlin College. One aspect of the course dealt with the reforms and status of women in the Arab world. I asked my students about their thoughts, opinions, and reactions when picturing Modern Arab women, and I assigned articles about the women of Hizbullah, the *Hikayat* book[10] that gives Lebanese women a creative voice, and the movie *Caramel* for them to read and watch for a class discussion. The specific assignment's emphasis is on the status of Muslim and Christian Lebanese women in all their diversity. The common response was that the American students envisioned veiled and mysterious women who have few individual rights; another response depicted Arab women as members of extremist Muslim groups. These representations do not include all women in the Arab countries, particularly all Lebanese women, but rather a faction of women in the Arab world. Throughout the semester, students became aware of the rapid transformation of Arab societies currently under way as they came to realize that perceptions of Arab women are shifting around the world, and that the advances of modern Arab women are significant. Arab women obtained crucial civil rights and freedoms in the second half of the nineteen century. Governments granted them the right to vote, to work outside the home, the choice to unveil or veil as they pleased, and they have made important social and political strides. Many of their accomplishments might have gone unheard of because female novelists in Arab society had a hard time making their way in the literary world. *Hikayat* is a compilation of short stories by Lebanese women with a wide range in age, including established writers as well as emerging ones. The stories in *Hikayat* cover the postwar period in Lebanon, which addresses a variety of female issues and themes. Although the writings refer to the war and blame conflicts on politics, the stories are nonpartisan and not politically charged. Students informed me that they were surprised by how much they enjoyed reading the stories.

Students agreed that the book presents a different look at women's issues and their daily struggles, and that as soon as they opened the book they felt an outpouring of emotion, and it was almost as if they were being liberated by reading the short stories. I will elaborate on three *hikayat* because of their creative content woven to the war and memory theme. Confusion, fear, and similar underlying can be felt across national and ethnic borders

The Green Bird by Emily Nasrallah is a story of a man who during the civil war lost his home, his gifted son, and took refuge in an apartment of the city whose owners left for Europe. As many refugees, there were many people living in small spaces, fleeing bombardments and slaughters from Southern Lebanon. Despite their modest living, the father had managed to finance his son's university studies to become a doctor. The entire family had hope for a better life upon the son's graduation and bright future. As expected, he would put his sisters through schools, help his father and mother financially. Tragically, his parents witnessed a bomb that killed him; he "exploded," they said. The father spent the entire night gathering his son's remains, mixed with blood, keeping him warm in a cold night and talking to him . . . The father lost the "last of his rational mind in that pool of blood." In addition, his uprooting from his home village added to his deteriorating state of mind. Since then, he sits, immobile, on a cement block in Beirut waiting, his eyes continuously moving and searching for the "green bird" to come back.

Power of Death by Etel Adnan addresses the intersections of love, confusion, fear, and desire. A young man, Wassef, leaves Damascus to pursue higher education in Sweden. He meets a Swedish student Erica at the university in Stockholm and overpoweringly falls in love with her. They are both completely smitten and give everything they can to one another. Consequently, the powerful relationship has an immense moral and physical impact on both of them. The intensity of their love is as if fiction became reality. Unexpectedly, Wassef decides to return to Damascus; he informs Erica just a day before his departure, despite the pain he inflicts on her. Back home, he pursues a career, marries an indigenous woman, and leads a traditional local life. As Wassef puts it, "I buried myself in Damascus, in work, then in a marriage which was interrupted." Forty years later, a sudden awakening makes him go back to Stockholm to see Erica again, but he then learns that she passed away two weeks earlier. At this moment, he realizes that he turned his back to the only happiness he had ever experienced. He would now give anything to understand why he gave her up, and he wonders if a defeat must have been destined for him. A deep truth hidden in himself reemerged after Erica's death and exclaims, "We only see things that do not exist, don't we?" She was "the source of desperation that I felt but never formulated: our relation transient

in essence, an absolute with no roots in this world."[11] For the rest of his life, he searched for and chased after younger women who would remind him of Erica or capture the ghost of Erica through their smiles. Confused, he entered the chaos of love, alternating between happiness and desperation.

Red Lips by May Ghoussoub raises the theme of refugees in a broader sense. The red color elucidates a survival reflex on a dark journey. May Ghoussoub exhibits that Red is what burns within each individual. The author depicts the life of a novice nun living in an isolated convent where she and two of her female friends, Joumana and Nada, retreated to prepare for the Baccalaureate exam, as was the custom in the 1960s and 1970s. May Ghoussoub walks the reader through the different meaning of the red color. In ancient Egypt, women stained their lips with red using henna or berry juice. The connotation of red ranges from absolute, pure, dazzling to mystery of life, from transgression to energy of life. In this novice nun's life, red becomes the color of fire and blood, the color of the soul, the libido, and the heart. Red also embodies the enthusiasm of youth releasing excitement but at the same time red proclaims the spoils of the dialectic between Heaven and Earth. Red suggests the desirable and the forbidden. Red warns, stirs vigilance, and release anger. Red is the color of Hells' fire as well as the devil's laughter.

These stories illustrate the strong voices of the characters that are personal, vibrant, and courageous enough to be sexual. The use of words and images come alive while reading, and the language and form are very expressive and detailed. Most importantly, these short accounts express communalities between Eastern and Western women. During wartime, it is easy to lose track of individuals and their experiences and struggles in times of crisis, but these short stories are rich in insightful details, psychological depth, and cross-cultural encounters. They force the reader to remember that statistics on the news cause people to grieve, cry, and express it in a different way, some of them through writing.

As in *Caramel, Hikayat* reiterates the commonalities between Lebanese and Western women. In their evolution and journey to modernization, Lebanese women share the same preoccupations as Western women. Despite the fact that *Caramel* tackles these universal feminine themes, one can perceive them as tainted with traditions and social and religious mores that still exist.

Leila Baalbaki: *Ana Ahya*

The UNESCO designated Beirut as the "World Capital of the Book" for 2009, and therefore Beirut has been the scene of an explosive cultural year,

especially for Arab and francophone culture. This designation is a recognition of the quality of its production and the prevalence of books, promoting reading as well as emphasizing the essential regional role of publication; reading is seen as a vector of dialogue.

Leila Baalbaki made a reappearance in Lebanon at this particular time. The Dar al-adab publishing house signed a contract with her to reedit her novels, marking a comeback after a 35-year hiatus. Who is Leila? She belongs to the prewar generation, since she was born in 1936 in Southern Lebanon to a traditional Shi'i family. Her grandfather, a *faqih*, taught villagers readings of the Qur'an and Arabic writing to the children of the village. At an early age, Leila was exposed to a myriad of prose pieces, and read *Nahj al-balagha* (The Path of Eloquence) written by Ali Bin Abi Taleb, the fourth Khalifa, whose work is a pillar in Arabic rhetoric.

Her father, Ali al-Hajj Baalbaki, is also a *zajalist* poet. *Zajal* is a popular dialectical poetry, founded on a sharp musical tone, which is determined by the rhythm of the language. This style of performance poetry is always theatrical. Growing up in such an intense literary environment prepared her well; at an early age, Leila was able to convey the poetry she heard many times into romantic prose. Later, she attended the Jesuit University to study Oriental Literature, and to ensure her independence, she accepted a post as a secretary in the Lebanese parliament. She then became a journalist, writing for various newspapers. Leila also lived in Paris from 1959 to 1961 and began studies at the Sorbonne that did not culminate in a degree. The existentialist movement of the time and the French cafés attracted her more than university life, and she earned herself the nickname of Françoise Sagan of Lebanon. As many of us did, she left the country at the outbreak of the Lebanese war in 1975 to establish herself in London, abandoning the literary scene.

She belonged to a generation that marked the renewal of Arabic literature in the sixties. In 1958, Leila wrote her first novel *Ana Ahya!,*[12] at 22 years. Her book echoed the spirit of the time through its themes of liberation and emancipation, considered provocative because of its modern literary style. *Ana Ahya* was greeted with immediate success in Lebanon and the entire Middle East. In 1961, *Ana Ahya* was translated into French (*Je vis*!) and it seduced a large French public as well. Through her novel, Leila represented the traditional Muslim society of which she was a member. The novel is her exclamation of life; she wanted to liberate herself from the rigid and retrograde mores of her milieu. *Ana Ahya* caused Leila to develop a reputation of a "rebel."

The novel recounts the wanderings of a young girl, Lina, in the streets of Beirut West in search of freedom. She has no respect for her father, who made a fortune through dubious transactions, or for her mother, who is content with her work as a housewife and entirely submissive position toward her

father. Lina falls in love with a young Iraqi student at the American University of Beirut where they are both studying. She thinks of him as a young progressive, believing in equality of women, but she soon realizes that he is a traditional Oriental male who considers her anarchist and not suitable to become a good wife to him. Desperate and shocked, she attempts to commit suicide, throwing herself between a car and a tramline. Lina does not die, which allows her to reflect on her life and gain perspective on her experiences.

Although a mark of desperation, the revolt through a suicide attempt also becomes the bearer of new hopes, perhaps an act of liberation. Forty years later, the message of *Ana Ahya* rings true because Lebanese women have not yet fully obtained their rights of independence. Besides some facades of freedom, women still feel a profound existential malaise.

Her third novel, *Safinat Hanan ila al qamar,* is banned for detracting public morals. Leila was arrested and subjected to interrogations regarding her morals and views. Luckily, the lawsuit ended peacefully and the tribunal found her not guilty, the processes demonstrating that "the situation of a female author is trivial," and thus not worth all of the attention and resources used to investigate it.

It is not a question of rewriting the history of the Arab woman's emancipation. Everything is happening as if the Arab woman has refused henceforth to be eternally sacrificed, as if she finally wanted "to live," to use Leila Baalbaki's cry of protest and affirmation . . . For the Arab woman, emancipation always entails confronting social censorship. The words "'aar" [disgrace] and "'aïb" [shame] recur like an insistent leitmotif in women's and Arab feminist literature.

Undeniably, the Arab woman of today is discovering the possible dimensions of life. This is providing us with a literature that is devilishly feminine but so profound, so expressive, and at times so captivating. The rebellion of women is becoming an explosion of protests against injustice and loss. It expresses itself under the form of the dialect of give and take. The Arab woman, eternal giver, is finally reclaiming reciprocity. She also wants to receive, which is an admirable goal.

The Arab woman intends to abandon the idea of the illusory kingdom of mothers, and it is not to a mythical reign that she aspires, but to an affirmative and positive one. She intends to affirm the potential of her talent, to live. Such is the rally cry of Muslim women who are advancing in society.

Rebellion of Shi'i Women: The Novelist Hanan Al-Shaykh

Hanan al-Shaykh belongs to a more recent generation of Lebanese female authors. Born into a Shi'i family, she grew up in conservative and modest

Ras el Nabeh. She became a journalist after receiving an education at the Ahliyya High School for Girls. She wrote for al-Hasna, a women's magazine, and later for *An-Nahar*, a prestigious newspaper before she became a full-time fiction writer. She moved to Saudi Arabia in 1976 as a result of the Civil War, where she stayed until 1982.

During that time, she wrote what is considered one of her most remarkable works, an modified autobiography, *Hikayat Zahra* (The Story of Zahra) in 1980. The novel chronicles the story of a woman named Zahra during the Lebanese Civil War, in which Zahra's family sends her to Africa to recover from two abortions and a nervous breakdown, where she avoids sexual advances by her uncle by marrying one of his associates. Finding herself trapped in a loveless marriage, Zahra returns to a ravaged Beirut, where she falls in love with a sniper who shoots at passersby. Because of its explicit sexual content, the novel was banned in most Arab countries, and at the time, no publisher in Lebanon would accept the work, so al-Shaykh published it with her own money.

Al-Shaykh published several other novels, and is considered a very important contemporary female author. She contributed to the Lebanese feminist movement, because al-Shaykh was anything but traditional, and she challenged society's expectations of her as a woman in the literary field. Her characters always experience tidal waves of emotions: inferiority, hatred, and confusion, much like how al-Shaykh describes her own life. Her works, written in Arabic, have been translated into English, French, Dutch, German, Italian, Danish, Spanish, Korean, and Polish, even though at the time of their publication they were banned.

Haifa Wehbe: The Oriental Charm beyond Listening

One afternoon, while the television was on and I was doing other things, I found myself half-watching the Oprah Winfrey show, where she was introducing remarkable women of the world. I was shocked to hear Oprah accurately recognize and declare Haifa Wehbe as the most well-known singer and most beautiful woman from the Arab world.

Haifa, a young Shi'i woman, evolved as a representative sex symbol for the entire Middle East. With a group of other young Lebanese singers such as Nancy Ajram and Nicole Saba, they embodied their own concept of songs incorporating elegance and beauty. A well-known fact is that Lebanese stars know how to promote themselves. They incarnate the Arab beauty with all its magic through their big expressive eyes and their attractive figures. As Khaled Youssef,[13] Egyptian director and screenwriter, puts it, "They care about every millimeter of their bodies and let stylists value their beauty." They

easily respond to evolution—seen here as Western characteristics since clips of Shakira and Jennifer Lopez are largely transmitted in the Arab World through satellite channels—while always keeping in mind their Oriental roots. Their singing goes beyond an auditory experience to include images of beauty and fascination. They believe that talent alone is not enough, and therefore emphasize beauty and exquisiteness in their performances. Moreover, Lebanese singers know how to take advantage of new technology. They commissioned their own websites, creatively managing and promoting their music and persona. There is no doubt that Lebanese stars are pioneering the art of celebrity in the Arab world. They are part of the lineage of charm coming from the Cedar country and they top the Arab music charts, particularly in Egypt where Egyptian young talent emulates the vision and stage presence of their Lebanese counterparts. Lebanese singers delight in the fact that Lebanon prides itself on being the most open society in the Arab world. They definitely offer an escape from daily life, which is full of tension and politics, whether in Lebanon or elsewhere in the Middle East.

Haifa Wehbe was born in a rural village in Southern Lebanon to a Shi'i Lebanese father and an Egyptian mother. She enjoyed listening to pop and rap music as a girl, and at age 16, she won a small beauty context in Southern Lebanon and was later voted Miss Lebanon in 1995 and gained fame across the Arab world as a fashion model. Currently, she is in her thirties and the Arab media considers her as one of the leading sex symbols of the Arab world. She is also featured in Pepsi Cola commercials with the famous soccer player Thierry Henry. In 2006 *People's Magazine* named her as one of the 100 most beautiful women. She won many Arab awards for her singing, including the prestigious Golden Lion Award in Egypt.

Haifa lost a brother in 1982 during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. She openly sides with Hizbullah; during a concert in Lebanon, she attacked Israel for attacking civilians and congratulated Hassan Nasrallah for his stand against Israel. In 2007, in celebration of the presidential election of Michel Suleiman in downtown Beirut, she wore a tee shirt with the picture of the newly elected president and sang a Fairuz song "Ya Hawa Beirut" (Love of Beirut), a nostalgic song written during the Civil War that refers back to the "glorious days" of Lebanon, prior to 1975.

So many women are open to showing their beauty and they do not all dress modestly in public. They voice their concerns and are not ashamed of being comfortable with being sexy. And in their process of modernizing, they are creating identities for themselves. The Lebanese media, although it does an excellent job portraying women as beautiful and attractive, has not been doing much for promoting women's capacity to participate in other spheres of

society, like politics. In order for those women who wish to move away from a sexualized image of women to do so, the media must be able to portray women in a more neutral light. This is to say that while women, just like men, can be desirable, attractive, and talented; they can also be smart, driven, and motivated toward change for the country. An image, for example, of the female citizen who works to help her family, who fights for the liberty and independence of her country or against the societal violence, is the image of an equally valuable Lebanese woman.

Women of my country—Nadia Tueni
Women of my country
the same light hardens your body,
the same shadow calms it;
softly melancholic in your metamorphoses.
The same pain cracks your lips
and your eyes are set by a unique goldsmith.
You,
who reassure the mountain
who make men believe they are men,
and ashes they are fertile,
and the landscape that it is immutable.
Women of my country,
you, who in the chaos find what is lasting.[14]

Each woman has her own way of life, her own creative way of solving problems, whether traditional or modern. All of these women, despite their religious differences, all seek to inspire young girls to better the world around them through example and see the humanity in each other, despite the raging conflicts around them. Between women of the same religion and between women of different religions in Lebanon as elsewhere, it is important to search for our communalities, a stepping stone to building a harmonious world, a common humanity, which is more important than disaccords and differences. The issues that women face are the same regardless of whether they are Christian or Muslim, from the East or from the West, and even young or older.

It is true that although Middle Eastern women seem different from Western women in styles of dress, language, values, and ideas about war, there are still many convergences between them. Christian women find themselves torn between the Orient and the Occident; they are accused of betraying both cultures, when in truth, they are searching for ways to bridge the gaps between these two diverse cultures. Not only is the Middle East changing,

but the globalized world is also changing and bringing its ideas and universal values together. This aids in the advancement of women in modern Arab societies and in the world as a whole. However, we are still waiting for the time when we will all be able to learn to accept our differences as societies, cultures, and nations and unite under our commonalities to work together for the advancement of all women.

CHAPTER 12

En Route toward a More Inclusive Civil Society

Traditions and the Transformation of Mentality

The existence of tradition is palpable, and its influence unquestionable. By definition, in a traditional community, there is a functional balance between the diverse aspects of social and economic life, and, consequently, any change is unforeseen. This extreme functionalist image is a sketch that emphasizes the fundamental tendency of tradition to create equilibrium in the social system.

Traditions have withstood the test of time due to a mysterious interior force, especially when a divine hand enforces them. Only through changes in every type of person—man or woman, young or old—can the influence of traditions be weakened.

The moral homogeneity of a village is questioned through transformations in each person's lifestyle. The real changes, promulgated by the rural exodus, disrupted the mentality shared within a community, which is shaped by traditions. The mentalities that were once unequivocally approved by society are now perceived as unfavorable and sarcastic.

"Tradition, in its etymological sense, is the translation, the transfer from a trustee to another, and the transmission of a product—in the first judicial sense—it is the transfer of a notion, or a way of behaving and acting."[1] It is so socially ingrained that it goes unnoticed. Yet, aren't the best known things always the least analyzed? It is important to familiarize oneself with this paradox and take the time to notice what, in the eyes of all, seems so "natural" that no one notices it.

There is no traditional knowledge that does not reflect on the entire personality, or that does not proceed from a mental or physical activity that engages (at least seemingly) the entire personality. The methodical character

of traditions is not a result of a previous agreement of minds, of an unlikely social contract, but from what we propose to name social empiricism—the empiricism of individuals engaged in coherent groups, thereby creating an individual empiricism that is constantly submitted to a collective surveillance. The real school of traditions was made up of certain stable and very coherent types of lifestyles where the transmission of what is lived is expressed through an oral transmission from mouth to ear, and is thereby heard by everybody.

"Women are by excellence the guardians of the old tradition of the sensitivity of the system of belief for the entire society."[2] Through their active presence in family life, and their educational role, they guarantee the permanence of a solid foundation of individual and social virtues. The cohesion and continuity of the collective identity rests on them. We never forget to emphasize and value the traditional "virtues" of the young girl, the sister, the spouse, the mother in poetics, and literary writings.

The Mentalities

"Mentality constitutes the dynamic and lively synthesis of each society."[3] It is common to the members of the same civilization, and it is the most resistant link that connects the individual to his group. The nature of mentality lends itself to stability since conviction is an involuntary fact; our mentality stands between the universe and ourselves like a prism. There exist close rapports between our mentality and our physical organism because being a real part of society means sharing its enthusiasm and repulsions. Subgroups are formed when culture is located outside the popular comprehension; hence, an intellectual difference of opinion is created between classes that are not always entirely caught up.

Social groups exhibit the need to project their aggressive instincts on other groups. History shows that, in general, religious, ethnic, nationalist, political, or economic minorities are either dominant and in power, or persecuted; they are promised to be either the elite or the marginalized.

Rivalries, accusation, and antipathies from one village to another, from one religion to the next, ideological and political hatred—they all seem to constitute a necessary component of mentalities. At its extreme, this negativity often leads to war, civil or foreign, which offers a sort of exit that is a collective sublimation, pleasant and catastrophic to the paroxysm of social impulsions. Perhaps in the future the progress of social science will show us how to surmount destructive impulsions that stem from the clash of negative social forces, or at least how to channel them toward other ends.

In general, complex societies are more open to innovations. On the other hand, primitive societies are often xenophobic, opposed to diversity, and closed to change. They are meticulously attached to their rituals and traditions. They have a tendency to exhibit what Bergson used to call *closed civilizations*, hostile to innovation, exchanges, and imitation. However, Bergson has contrasted them with open societies in terms of outside influences as well as creativity developed within the community. Open societies characteristically allow divergences and varieties in opinion. Likewise, they more easily produce original individuals, and personalities capable of superior creativity.

It is incontestable that the politics of the ruling social class dictate the trend of demographic and economic evolution in certain countries vis-à-vis others. These classes jealously reserve all important positions to their own posterity. The phenomenon of the renewal of the elite, in which it is impossible for highly talented members of the lower class to ascend to any position of consequence, cannot take place. This lack of movement within the elite explains the tendency of our societies toward stagnation. It is necessary to recall that the caste system is founded on a familial ideology and on a doctrine that places heredity above any other personal quality. Through history, most peoples have known similar forms of hierarchy, and now, necessity requires that they be surmounted.

"We cannot talk about variations of mentalities until our mindsets are modified." In Lebanon, new techniques (media, social media, radio, films, etc.) are promulgating the disappearance of the particularistic and folkloric way of life under the influence of the knowledgeable civilization. A special phenomenon to the social logic: in the domain of technical or technological inventions, the inventions are accumulated, but in terms of value, inventions can be substituted. Since we are dealing with largely affectionate beliefs, one belief excludes the other. Over the course of the last few years, there have been great efforts to enact a particular psychological technique to transform children and young people into radicals. On the contrary, we cannot talk about moral invention unless individuals start to question and refuse what is contrary to conformist engagement.

In certain cases, the rate at which common sense can develop is astonishing. For example, the suffrage of women and their access to political rights seemed an absurdity until recent years. Today, this notion has been incorporated into the mainstream, and we would judge it absurd to question it. A profound change of men and women's mentality has created this new attitude. We have passed the point of no return. Some are rejoicing, and others are in regret.

Frequently, changes in social structure are not even perceived or interpreted until they degenerate into a catastrophic event. They are the brusque discharge of a slowly developing phenomenon. It is the quickly surfacing solution of a long-meditated problem.

The existence of unequal development in the compartments of the mentality has caused significant problems and drama throughout the course of human history. Consequently, institutions only partially accept innovations and discoveries because of barriers in contrary beliefs or the survival of existing mentalities. The inequalities in the development of mentalities lead to equally ineffectual social development, and to the emergence of real social atrocities.

This is why the necessity of action is important for women. They do not accept discrimination—the vestige of a tradition that has become foreign to them. They desire to live in equal opportunity without having to ask for it as a particular protection. They do not ask for the subtle privileges demanded by men, but are astonished that they have yet to acquire them. They want to ask because they believe that it is possible that, regardless of sex, it is possible for each person to choose his or her role in a society that respects the dignity and the responsibility of all.

> What was for centuries presented, lived and psychologically integrated as realities dictated by natural law (e.g. the status of women), is now being discovered as a possible contingency propagated by the authority—political, theological, philosophical, scientific etc.—of cultural norms. Today, we have the question of deconstructing all traditional cultures to unveil their mechanisms of transvestitism, the mask of true reality . . . this instigates a will to act for the emancipation of the human condition, to transform the heaviness of a stereotyped tradition that . . . we are required to radically rethink the human condition outside still dominant mythologies and ideologies.[4]

Toward a More Inclusive Civil Society

In 1943, Lebanon acquired its independence from the French mandate. The Lebanese constitution that followed specifies the political system as a parliamentary democracy, conferring that the elected parliament represents the legislative branch, which has the duty to remedy errors and inaccuracies. Moreover, a "confessional quota" is embedded in our democracy and manifested in the other two governmental branches, executive and legislative, as well as in all administrative institutions. As a result, political and social reforms require consensus between all confessions that are an integral part of the Lebanese pluralistic political system. This plurality of confessions made way for enrichment for the country on the cultural and social level,

making Lebanon the most democratic and open society in the Arab world. Unfortunately, the contrary side of this pluralistic system manifested itself in the many confrontations and divisions that exploded in civil war that the Lebanese endured. The 18 confessions in Lebanon mean 15 personal status laws directly affecting women's lives living in this rather chaotic situation, making it difficult to create a truly inclusive civil society without contradicting other groups, in which religion is a positive aspect of identity and culture.

Being either Christian or Muslim, we are confronting similar challenges due to different personal laws. The different daily lives of women have been affected by the progress made in the last three decades. The growing place of Lebanese women is clearly noticeable in the social, economic, and political arenas. The League of Lebanese Women's Rights (LLWR) was founded in 1953, the year in which Lebanese women obtained the right to vote under the presidency of Camille Chamoun. Linda Matar[5] presided the League that same year and fought for women's rights in Lebanon and the Arab World until 2000. For a half century, she dedicated her life for the women's struggle and oversaw reforms that made the League become a vocal element for civil society. She led campaigns for women to run for office, and she herself ran unsuccessfully for the legislative elections in 1996 and 2000. *Marie-Claire*, a French magazine, voted her as "the 100 women who are moving the world." In addition to the League's effort, today, newly formed NGOs are present in Lebanon to implement effectively awareness programs aiming at correcting the system's deficiencies. All of these efforts exist with hope for change and aim to help the situation of Lebanese women in their struggle.

How do the situations of Christian and Muslim women present themselves in Lebanon? In a violent uprising, like the one encountered by Leila Baalbaki, or in a evolution that opens the future and does not dismiss the best aspects of tradition? We hold on to positive elements, in spite of the difficulty of a complete synthesis between the old Oriental mentality and the influence of the Occident.

From a familial perspective, an ancient mentality that welcomes the birth of a boy and disapproves the birth of a girl unfortunately still widely prevails. The Arabic word for child is *walad* (boy), a basic discrimination that intensifies through a young woman's teen and adult years. Our analysis in Chapter 2 indicates that education does not instill in girls the same aspiration to exist in the world through freedom and independence as for boys. Girls experience a conflict between autonomy and existence; the family social and religious environment is the major factor determining the situation of women. An important discrimination translated into law is that a Lebanese woman married to a non-Lebanese man cannot legally bequeath

her nationality to her child, whereas a Lebanese man who marries a non-Lebanese woman is able to transfer the Lebanese citizenship to his wife one year following their union, and ipso facto, their children obtain Lebanese citizenship.

The free choice of a spouse that has become a reality in both the urban and rural Christian milieu is still making its way in Muslim milieu, first in the city among the wealthy and then toward the rural areas at a more modest pace. Although a consequence of patriarchy, this aspect of family life contributes to discrimination between women and men. Muslim women's increased awareness of their own dignity is translated into their social role, as seen in Hizbullah's women and in their determination to contribute to religious interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith. Polygamy is almost nonexistent and repudiation is in regression. Druzes have always practiced monogamy.

The existence of many personal law statuses is an impediment to mixed marriages between the different confessions that coexist. Although the *shari'a*, in terms of divorce, confers same possibilities for women and men, the reality is quite different. Men obtain a divorce much more easily than women are able to.

As for inheritance, Muslim males inherit a portion that is double that of what their sisters receive. Although Christians have changed antiquated inheritance laws in the sense of equality between women and men, practically secret negotiations remain in the sense of preserving the heritage in the family. In addition, a Lebanese woman, whether Christian or Muslim, who marries a spouse from outside their confession, encounters problems, discrimination, and a difficult life ahead.

For a more inclusive civil society, a promulgation of civil personal law statuses for all Lebanese citizens will seek to remedy this unequal situation between women and men, as well as between women of different confessions.

From an Educational Perspective

The characteristics of education for a young rural Christian girl are the same as those for a young Muslim girl. However, Muslim girls are more controlled, care more about others' impressions of them, and guard their reputations more zealously. Muslim girls who studied in Saghbine's Christian schools no longer shake hands as a greeting. This education of recluse engenders timidity about which Christian classmates complain. Muslim girls work seriously in class, but openness is still lacking; they need to have relations with society, particularly with young men. In comparison, a young Christian woman feels more dignified, more respected in her milieu, more active, and consequently more liberated. She has more opportunities to meet young men.

Though not as rigid as in rural areas, Muslim education in cities remains somehow closed. Society is generally more rigorous with girls, and less scrupulous with boys. However, in bourgeois family, girls are brought up almost the occidental way. They enroll in the American or Saint Joseph Universities. Other girls coming from milieus that are more modest attend the Lebanese University, and scholarships allow them to continue their studies overseas, similar to Christian women. The late prime minister Rafik Hariri awarded scholarships for numerous outstanding Lebanese students, both male and female, granting them the opportunity to study abroad, regardless of their confessional sect. From the future intellectual elite currently receiving this common education, our coming together will emerge more strongly than ever before in a more profound understanding of our major common religious, cultural, and national heritage.

Private and public schools are present in different Lebanese regions. However, because of the civil war and the political conditions in Southern Lebanon, studies show a higher degree of illiteracy among women at 28 percent.[6] Modest families consider sending their boys to school first as a priority. This phenomenon brought a number of NGOs to organize sessions on alphabetization in rural areas. On the other hand, the opposite phenomenon exists in urban areas, seen in the increasing number of highly skilled and educated women—doctors, engineers, lawyers, judges, journalists—and more than 70 percent of educators are women.

Pedagogy in Lebanon does not work toward the unification between different confessions; on the contrary, programs push toward divisions between confessions, and there is an emphasis on having a sense of belonging to one confession rather than creating and basking in a national identity. A major problem is that programs offered are sometimes different for different confessions. Programs that present the history of Lebanon are contradictory, depending on the confession of the founder of the school. Although education of citizenship is available and provides students with civic concepts, this civic education remains a superficial gesture toward progress. Civic knowledge remains academic and students lack the experience of true democracy. The system does not encourage debates or political discussion, nor has research begun on inclusion of different perspectives yet. Teacher's emphasis is usually more on memorization, and in some cases on indoctrination. The educational system shows a clear impregnation of the current political and religious system. They accept the political system founded on confessions independently of the principle of personal merit. Young girls have a tendency to participate in social and civil actions, but remain more ideologically conservative than young men, particularly in regard to making choices related to mixed marriage. The sense of belonging to a confession supersedes the sense of belonging to the Lebanese state.

Women's work was largely elaborated upon in Chapter 4. The LLWR organization and other NGOs worked closely with local syndicates to ratify laws on the status of working women from a legal perspective. These ratifications positively influenced the women's situation at work but did not abolish all discriminations, such as family compensation, tax deductions, and maternity leave. A law ratified in 2000 promotes equity in salaries, more than seven weeks for maternity leave, and protection in cases of sexual harassment, but has not yet yielded the expected results. In the public sector too, women remain in the lower echelon. In both sectors, women are subjected to injustice, because tax laws make provisions for a higher imposition for married women than married men.

IndyAct, an NGO based in Beirut, supported a campaign against sexual harassment on April 25, 2010.[7] A group of feminists took the initiative to launch a sexual harassment campaign to increase awareness of this issue. The public has historically not considered sexual harassment as a problem but rather as part of the "culture" construct of the country. Scarce statistics exist on the subject. The Ministry of Social Affairs revealed in 2007 that three complaints per week are filed for sexual harassment and rape. Activists believe that these numbers do not reflect actual cases, and suspect that the reality is greater. Since the issue remains taboo, activists' slogan is "Talk about it without shame." The message is to encourage victims to file complaints. Victims are usually scared to talk about the subject because society continues to systematically place overused blame on them, saying that it was "because you come home late at night, or because of the way you were dressed, or because you provoked them."

Female victims have no recourse to any authority to protect themselves. Indeed, there is no law that explicitly states that sexual harassment is an offense or misdemeanor. At the administration commissionership, police officers tend to mock female victims of sexual harassment and domestic violence when they have the courage to complain. Rapists can escape punishment if they marry their victims. Victims of sexualized violence are completely silenced, requiring a polar shift in Lebanese mentality of these issues, and by extension, gender equality in general, because after all, Lebanon is considered an open society by the rest of the Middle East and the entire world.

From a Political Perspective

Although in Lebanon, politics is synonymous with the politico-confessional crisis, women are interested in politics. Through their work, whether in creating schools, enhancing health conditions, or asking for improvement in work conditions, they participate in the political life. A direct and greater

participation in the political sphere is, nonetheless, crucial for women; their voices must be heard, and they are the ones who should help to make decisions for the future.

In 1996, Lebanon ratified the "International Convention for the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women," promulgated by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1979, but with a few exemptions regarding equal rights in marriage, custody of children, and adoption. This document was a good start for the entire process moving away from a discriminatory society. The LLWR and the National Council for Lebanese Women reinforced the struggle of the feminist movement, and today the National Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination brings together approximately 60 organizations and important individuals, both women and men, in this movement.

In the executive branch, there is only the Ministry of Social Services that deals with women and family issues. An urgent need exists for the creation of services that relate directly to the situation of women at the ministerial level—Ministries of Labor, Justice, Health, Information and Culture—Those services will ensure the applicability of decisions and recommendations of NGOs that are currently active on the ground.

Women and Organizations

In Lebanon, members of the first organizations came from wealthy social classes; they were educated and driven toward social work. Their activities were limited to help the needy and provide medical care. Today's NGOs work toward literacy and professional formation.

The League for Lebanese Women's Rights was born in 1947. Women who participated in the struggle for independence, manifesting in the streets asking that the French Mandate be terminated, created the League in 1947. In 1948 the first action of the League was to celebrate the International Women's Day, for which an enormous number of women came out to participate. In the Grand Theater in downtown Beirut, the women were surprised to find themselves encircled by a military force, under the pretext that the celebration was imported from abroad. Despite the confrontation, the celebration continued, and women protested in the streets against the actions of the government. March 8 is no longer "imported from abroad," since in 1975, the United Nations adopted this date as International Women's Day. Today, many religious charitable organizations linked to a particular confession as well as many NGOs work to supplement the failing efforts of the government (Hizbullah, Dar al-Makassed el Islamiyya, St. Vincent de Paul, Caritas). Organizations and over 30 NGOs that address women's issues, such

as discrimination, violence against women, female quotas for parliament, and other social and national problems, are on the rise.

Certain NGOs are addressing issues of violence against women. A study completed in 2008 of a sample of 300 women showed that 87 percent reported verbal abuse, and 86 percent reported physical violence. The United Nations, which completed the study for the Arab Women's Network,[8] defined verbal abuse as name-calling ("cow," "dog," "animal"). Physical abuse was defined as a beating with various household materials: a stick, hands or legs, rope, and sometimes these beatings also included burning with a coffee pot, iron, hot water, or choking them in a bucket of cold or hot water. Ninety percent of women described their resulting symptoms in a way that could be classified as psychological abuse, manifesting itself in anxiety, fear, distrust, neglect and humiliation in their daily lives. Fifty-five percent of women also reported sexual abuse by their husbands, through adultery, forcing their wives to participate in group intercourse or through violence in sexual encounters. Husbands also deny their wives of money allowance driving them to file for divorce; in fact, 65 reported an aspect of economic abuse, having their salaries taken from them, not being given access to properties and assets, being forced to quit their jobs that provide them with dignity and purpose.

Many difficulties exist for women, such as ones stemming from preconceived notions and obstacles around electoral laws. In March 8, 2008, Mirna Atallah, a member of the NGO National Democratic Institute (NDI), an American association bringing together experts and patricians from all around the world to effectuate formation sessions in different regions of the globe about the theme of democracy, was mentioned in an article for *L'Orient Le Jour*.[9] NDI provides services called "schools of campaigning" for women to become candidates for legislative or municipal elections. These focus groups aim to thoroughly prepare women who envision political carriers but who have had difficulties breaking through. Mirna Atallah cited the following obstacles coming from women themselves: "fear—mothers warn daughters not to do get involved in the dangerous domain of politics, death might be the outcome . . . reputation—linked to the notion of poorly seen by society . . . fund raising—a method of campaigning still considered a form of begging." Most NGOs work in the domain of women empowerment, consolidating their economic role within an active society. Nonetheless, NDI seeks ways to attract women to embrace participation in politics without fear.

The electoral process presents a great deal of financial possibility, about $300,000 for campaigning, which is not accessible to every candidate; it is difficult to break into a well-established political party to receive such funding. Fouad Boutros, former Minister of Internal Affairs, presided over the electoral commission and advocated the implementation of a 30 percent

female quota[10] on electoral lists of the proportional mode. Hopefully, through this legislation, women will become more visible in politics because of laws for financing women's campaigns.

The question remains as to whether women in politics would be more open or tolerant than men. Solidarity between women is still lacking, which is to say that women, although they encounter many of the same discriminations and struggles in Lebanon both today and historically, have not yet truly embraced the role they can serve for each other, but, rather, remain loyal to their religious or ethnic groups. Even within the same religious group, women lack solidarity with one another.

Participation of Women in Legislative Elections

The participation of women is crucial in all fundamental political changes. The right to vote and to hold public office was originally accorded to educated women only by the executive branch in 1953, even though both educated and noneducated men were allowed to vote. Women protested, claiming that this inequality was truly discriminatory, and women's associations including the LLWR protested the decision. The argued that, first, the law did give the right to illiterate men to vote and furthermore that women were not responsible for their lack of literacy at the time because of the sporadic existence of public schools, and the financial situations of some families who could not afford to send their daughter to private schools. Later that same year, all women became voting members of Lebanese society.[11]

Women are rather absent from the political sphere, except for a myriad of sorrow female heiresses who are acting out of their responsibilities to continue their husband's legacies. A remarkable trend has emerged in which widows of assassinated or deceased political figures enter the public domain soon after, where these women are elected based on the prevalence of the sympathy vote. Some link this to the conservative environment heir of the Muslim tradition that surrounds Lebanon. Women have been eligible candidates for legislative elections since 1953, but it was in 1963 that Myrna Boustani became the first woman to enter the parliament. She was elected to complete her late father's term. Other women ran for legislative elections but society and the confessional electoral laws proved to be barriers to their success. Similarly, when parliament opened in 1991, Naila Muawad was elected after the assassination of her husband, who was the president-elect. In 1992, three women entered the parliament, Naila Muawad, Bahia Hariri, the sister of Rafiq Hariri, and Maha Khoury. Maha Khoury was elected by chance, because in her district, all other candidates boycotted participation in the election. In 1996, Nouhad Soueid reentered the parliament, the first time was after the sudden death of

her husband. Militant women who do not belong to a political family, or do not have the financial means have a hard time running as candidates and they are often not taken seriously.[12]

In 2005, many female candidates ran in different regions, but most of them did not succeed. However, their courage brought out the wind of change that took hold of all domains of Lebanese society. After the withdrawal of the Syrian army, a liberating wind gave the impression to all categories of society that everything was possible. The wives who inherited political posts—Solange Gemayel, Naila Moawad, Bahia Hariri—somehow succeeded. Bahia had to surmount many obstacles to prove to her masculine colleagues that she was capable of doing her work well and in some cases doing a better job than they could do. In 2009, Solange Gemayel and Naila Moawad ceded their candidacy to their sons who were elected. From seven women who declared candidacy, four of them—Naila Tueni, Strida Tawk, Bahia Hariri, and Gilberte Zuein—won, because of either their politically influential families or their vast wealth.

Lebanon has been a model that shines because of its ingenuity but is also a disappointing model, seen through its political failures. A good Lebanese citizen is someone who respects and implements the aspects of life that make Lebanon unique. This specificity does not only derive from the richness of its glorious past, but it also derives from the talent of one's fellow citizens, and mainly from the respect for and tolerance of others. A good citizen does not judge others based on their confession or social class; after all, our diversity is our richness. Lebanon has everything to become the model country of coexistence and liberty. A good citizen belongs to Lebanon first and above all.

Lebanon is a model of conviviality, consensual agreement, accordance, and harmony. Currently, we are increasing our awareness and forming new reflections about the meaning, extent, and dimensions of the Lebanese formula *sigha*.[13] This new reflection stems from the identity crisis seizing the Arab world, which is facing accelerated modernization and globalization. The outdated political structures of most Arab countries are not adaptable to our time. Despite the inherent weaknesses in our political leaders, the failure of our *sigha* is mainly due to external regional, political, and religious factors. Lebanon has always been and will remain an example of democracy, liberty, and tolerance to all Arab countries because of the presence of both Christians and Muslims and the necessity that they coexist.

Conclusion

Despite the real unity that the Arabic language and culture bring, Lebanon is geographically at the crossroads of civilizations. Depending on which periods one considers of its history, Lebanon is either dominated, in painful tensions or in moments of balance. It is truly unique in its synthesis of war and peace—with few examples of instances where the two have been mutually exclusive.

At the moment, the world is dominated by masculine values of confrontation, which produces anxiety and worry, especially in Lebanon. The Arab Spring, fueled by frustration, and injustice now calls for more feminine values—collaboration, peacekeeping, and unity—to ensure an inclusive and progressive transition. While the Arab Spring has not prompted regime change in Lebanon, it has called upon civic protestors to take to the streets to protest for unity—namely, for the need to move away from a religiously fueled sectarianism toward secularism.

Undoubtedly, the sectarian Lebanese system led to the politicization of religion; indeed, this political dimension gave the means to make way for the political cast to compete for power sharing, and consequently implicating the intervention of external forces, which redefined modernity with a sacred foundation. This new modernity has implications for the status of women and the organization of society. This sectarian mechanism also undermines our common living together for which we are fighting.

A New Generation, A New Vision

At the center of the movement for change are young Lebanese women and men. College students from around the country are joined together in their call for *laïcité*, a French form for secularism. In April 12, 2012, for the commemoration of the civil war in Lebanon, the *laïc* Club, a student organization at the American University of Beirut, articulated the importance of *laïcité* to guarantee equality and freedom for all Lebanese citizens by drawing a direct link between the sectarian system and the civil war. They warned against the

confessional system and its hindering effects on the edification of the rule of laws in the state. "The role of *laïcité* in the edification of a State with rule of law is not an illusion. The illusion is to believe that the confessional system can be sustained."[1]

Every sect has its own idea of Lebanon, and the Lebanese find ways around and against each other to negotiate their idea and make it triumphant. Fortunately, the new generation has a high level of awareness and sensitivity of the dangers of the confessional system, and they are confident that the only path ahead in protecting each sect, and particularly minority groups, is a path of open discussion and a shift toward national unity in a civil society. The different minorities that form the Lebanese fabric are the richness of the country as well as its raison d'être.

Secular, Not Sectarian

For many Lebanese, the old French saying *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, or "the more things change, the more they stay the same" is largely due to the political stalemates and outbursts of violence caused by sectarianism. In the face of divisiveness, secularism presents itself as the long-term sustainable alternative to preserve a free, sovereign, democratic, and pluralistic Lebanon. There are more than 70 NGOs in Lebanon and the young people, especially women, work to change their positions within society, both Christian and Muslims alike.

Can Lebanon make progress while the sectarian system keeps it divided? For instance, as I mentioned in Chapter 12, in Lebanon, domestic violence is not considered a crime, and the law does not recognize rape within marriage a crime. *Nasawiya*, a Beirut-based NGO, has drafted a law for unified protection against domestic violence victims in 2010, which was passed to the Lebanese Parliament and the Department of the Interior. A subcommittee was formed in the Parliament during that time to address the draft law, and the committee added a small clause to the existing legislature. However, the draft law sat within the Department of the Interior and the Parliament for a significant amount of time without going into effect. Why the delay? Because one member, a Shi'i member of Hizbullah, added a clause indicating that "a woman can appear in a civil court only if the religious courts allow it."[2] His statement clearly indicates that religious law should take precedence over the jurisprudence and laws of the state. In reaction, several NGOs and feminist collectives mobilized in January 2012 to protest before the Lebanese Parliament and the Department of the Interior in downtown Beirut, drawing more public attention to the issue.

Similarly, Dar el-Fatwa, the Sunni High Religious Council, criticized the legitimacy of this draft law, citing that this project opens the door to harm

for Muslim women. They believe the law refuses women the existing rights that they have in the religious court, also believing that this project conforms to a Western mentality that does not correspond with societal values, endangers the traditional nuclear family unit, and denies a father the right to educate his children, and specifically girls, who are most in need of his protection. The Sunni court believes that this law would have a psychological impact on the Muslim children who will see their mother defying the moral authority of their father. The organization denounced the creation of new punishable crimes such as the rape of a spouse and refused the interference of the police in family affairs, and, furthermore, against the use of minors as witnesses. Like the Shi'i, they declared this law to be dangerous, for many of the same reasons, not wanting the state to interfere with private matters. In this interpretation of modernity, the state cannot interfere in private laws, despite pressing human rights issues surrounding the subject. Most importantly, in this interpretation, religious law has clout in a civil space. John Donahue argues that when economic and social development is perceived as threats to the integrity of identity, fundamentalist religious views are seen by some as a refuge from the onslaught of change.[3] Yvonne Haddad also states, "One wonders whether the shift in affirmation of religious models for the role of women is an attempt to maintain a status quo in a society that is changing rapidly, or whether it is a traditional Islamic attempt at recapturing an 'idealized reality' in a situation of flux."[4] Change is inevitable and engrained in our culture, but fundamentalists attempt to resist the natural trajectory of changes in society, calling for a return to religious roots to reestablish an authentic identity. They resist change to cling to structural power, or to redirect the future back toward the past. And the other alternative involves dismantling the cultural tools for moving forward.

The network of the pro-secular NGO Laïque Pride members in Beirut and around the world organized simultaneous protests across national lines—raising the issue of secularism to the international level. On May 15, 2011, Laïque Pride members marched in Beirut, and, simultaneously, their Lebanese expatriate counterparts marched in many major international cities including London, Brussels, Copenhagen, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Washington, D.C. Protestors demonstrated a communal spirit, as young women walked with white Western wedding veils and T-shirts that read "Civil Marriage." Laïque Pride currently supports two draft laws—one to amend the Lebanese Personal Status laws that prohibit women from passing on their citizenship to their children; the other is the draft law cited above, and provides more protection for women suffering from domestic violence. Laïque Pride is just one example of many Lebanese NGOs and civil society organizations that believe that citizenship means rights, obligations, and protection for all, and that secularism is the only way to achieve that objective.

March 2012 announced the first all-female police unit of the Interior Security Forces (ISF). These 610 Lebanese women will assume full police responsibilities in July 2012. Todd Robinson, a US official attending the ceremony of this first female officers-in-training showing their newly acquired skills stated that "this program is designed to support reform in the Lebanese law enforcement sector by strengthening the capacity of the ISF to enforce the rule of law in Lebanon and to protect the Lebanese people."[5] Indeed, this unit of women challenged physical and moral barriers as well as stereotypes common to the Arab world, and in practice, their successful performance will mark the formal integration of women in security forces. Already rumors are spreading that they will prove more capable than men in reinforcing the law.

It is important to note that by the ISF uniform code prohibit any showing of religious symbol while on duty. Muslim women who wear the veil are not exempt from the ISF code. This first policewomen unit evidences that Lebanon is a unifying country not a dissonant one. Women are actively embracing their role as agents of change and are succeeding in their new roles. There is no doubt that women can also successfully assume leadership roles, and there is need to create opportunities to open that journey that will expand female leadership around the world and unify the Lebanese society through the empowerment of women.

The religious diversity in Lebanon has been a source of an undeniable richness. Lebanon, with its deep diversity, summarizes the world in its richness and problems. We had the chance to live this diversity despite the difficulties it brought. In order to ensure a peaceful religious pluralism, an intercommunity debate on civil life in Lebanon as well as an intense reflection on the advantages and advantages of the religious and the temporal imposes itself. How then do we apply the conditions of such a separation while respecting the rights of all communities? This question has no clear answer, but it will define the future of Lebanon as a peaceful nation or a fragile state.

Is it not the task of women, who biologically carry life, and are always close to the most concrete forms of this life, to struggle against the forces of divisiveness that are operative in the world and prominent in Lebanon? One could almost say that this country, through its openness, has already presented certain feminine traits. Is not Lebanon's mythical heroine Europe, the Phoenician virgin taken away by Zeus, whose name became eponymous of a continent searching to become a community? After her, did not Elissa, through her audacity and her patient ingenuity, become the founder of a new city, the African Carthage? Moreover, was it not this same Carthage that nourished and grew the daring explorer departed such as Hannibal?

Admittedly, women become more efficient in the public, moral, and political spheres; their new responsibilities now forbid them from considering

submission as an immutable attitude. They wish to utilize their feminine values not only for output, but also for a broader humanism. The evolution that we are witnessing does not signify the disappearance of feminine pluralism: Diverse women often have, in their thoughts and behaviors, different and complementary attitudes toward change.

It is in service to these values of diversity that we must deploy our creativity. The time has come to challenge accepted values and to open ourselves to the fundamental questions of cultural, religious, and political diversity that comprises the uniqueness of Lebanon. We need to accept our differences and others who differ from us in order to achieve a more sustainable existence under one Lebanese identity. There are hopes that more involvement from NGOs and participation in local organizations will help unify Lebanon and increase a sense of solidarity.

Common civic responsibilities will bring Muslims and Christians, and by extension, the men and women of both groups, together to facilitate improved social relations and a true degree of equality for all, regardless of gender or religious affiliation. The new generation is attempting to rewrite the personal laws and in their action are reinforcing the idea that a "Unified Lebanon" is becoming less and less of a myth as time goes on. As the mentalities of the Lebanese people begin to intersect, and the prospect of solidarity becomes a reality, and the deepening of the meaning of "modernity" includes a place for religious resurgence adjusted for life in a secular civilization. The mission of Lebanese women, regardless of religion, is developing to more prominently feature national identity as a means of self-identification, instead of focusing primarily on group affiliation. However, politics and religion are the Scylla and Charybdis between which these female activists must negotiate in order to positively achieve the Lebanese ideal of pluralism.

Lebanon holds the torch of civilization in the Arab world through its message of openness and implementation of elements that pave the way to a more inclusive civil society. Together, Christians and Muslim women will uphold the torch of civilization to save the Great Lebanon, and spread the message of unity to the entire turbulent region. Herein lies our alternative constructive modernity that paves the way for good citizens to obey one set of rules and civil laws.

Notes

Introduction

1. Paramilitary militia headed by Pierre Gemayel. For further information, see William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000), 372–376.
2. Known also as the Tigers, Camille Chamoun's own private Christian political party.
3. In the 1950s Camille Chamoun was committed to Lebanon's Western orientation while an increasing number of Muslims were attracted to Nasser Pan-Arabism. See Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 326–327.
4. This term is controversial and evokes different meanings. I use it in the sense of gradual transformation/progress by women's efforts to respond to the demand of contemporary times. Evolution is the development of men's/women's latent capabilities, which under the action of favorable circumstances are certain to occur at a certain time. This definition implies that development is a continuum and opens the terrain for the formation of subjectivities, particularly among women and activists.
5. Hizbullah, the Party of God, had formed in Lebanon following the Iranian revolution. Its motto was taken from the Qur'an (58:22) perceived as against the Party of Satan (Qur'an 58:19–20). For further information, see Chapter 5, Part II.
6. For more information, see Part III, Chapter 9.
7. Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 20.
8. Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity* (USA: Penguin Book, 2003), 146. In Lebanon, the quota system divides governmental and administrative power between the three main religious communities according to their numerical number. Though the quota system respects the law of numbers, it is carried to its extreme and does not provide safeguards for the minorities. Thus, each community feels inadequately represented and thus perceives the system to be unjust.
9. *Nahda* is the Arabic word for renaissance. Lebanon is known as the cradle of the Arab Renaissance and a center of dialogue of cultures and religions. Together the churches' bell towers and the mosques' minarets sounds resonate.

10. Joseph Maila, head of "Pole Religions" at the Quai d'Orsay ("Le Liban symbolise jusqu'à la déchirure les contradictions du monde arabe"), interviewed by Carole Dagher for L'Orient-Le Jour, October 21, 2009, Beirut. Lebanon represents a real synthesis of all questions related to the Arab contemporary reality as Arab countries struggle to embrace a necessary modernity. Lebanon symbolizes their contradictions at the expense of its own split.
11. For further information, see Chapter 6, Part II. 20
12. Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1994), 17–39.
13. Landers Spickard and McGuire, *Personal Knowledge and Beyond, Reshaping the Ethnography of Religion* (New York: New York University Press), 195–201. McGuire argues that "good" evidence should not distort the respondent's experiences, beliefs, and feelings; he poses the question of how research can be grounded as truth while using interpersonal interactions and indicates that introspection as a strategy can be valuable.
14. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interview and Other Writings*, 1972–1977, edited and translated by Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1972). The reorganizing of knowledge means recreating an epistemological ensemble that defines the conditions and limits of the development of each field of knowledge. Truth becomes the creation of the process that discovers it, and in the modern world, power, and knowledge are inextricably linked.
15. Spickard and McGuire, *Personal Knowledge,* 239.
16. Ibid., 239.
17. National Pact of 1943. Maronite President Bechara el-Khuri and Sunni Prime Minister Riyadh el-Solh worked out a compromise solution to the problem of Lebanese sectarianism and regional identity: Christians accepted Lebanon's Arab identity and Muslims renounced the merger with other Arab states. More importantly, the pact spells out a formula of sectarian representation in the parliament.
18. Authority given to the succession of the prophet, or an imam (descent of the imam Ali), to lead the Islamic nation.
19. For more information, see Chapter 10, Part III.

Chapter 1

1. Toufic Touma, *Un village de montagne au Liban* (Paris: Mouton & Co. La Haye 1948), 10.
2. An administrative district.
3. A subnational administrative district.
4. Charki means "East" and Gharbi means "West."
5. Anis Freiha, *Mo'jam asma' el-moudon wal koura el-loubnaniyya* (Beirut: Maktabat Loubnan, 1972), 103. Afif B. Morhej, *I'raf Loubnan* (Beirut: n.p. 1965).
6. See annex photograph of the monastery.

7. Antione Khoueiry, *Zahle malhamat soumoud wa boutoula* (Beirut: Markaz el-Ilham), 1982.
8. One dennum = 1,000 m^2. Land used to be measured by how much of it can be worked in one day of labor.
9. "Finnage, or limits of a communal territory, creates a 'space that is legally owned by a collectivity of people who manage it.' " Henri Mendras, *Sociétés Paysannes* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1976), 35.
10. The Chapel was abandoned in March 16, 1956, after an earthquake.
11. The Maronites are the most influential Christian community in Lebanon. They affirmed their communion with the Catholic church in the twelfth century, and in 1584 they founded the "Maronite college" in Rome. The Patriarch of Antioch and the Middle East Monsignor Nasrallah Sfeir is currently the head of the Maronite Church. His headquarters is in Bkerke on a mountaintop overlooking the Mediterranean. Maronites played an essential role in the creation of the "Great Lebanon" following the fall of the Ottoman Empire.
12. Jean Corbon, L'Eglise *des Arabes* (Paris: Edition Cerf, 1977), 29–33.
13. Ibid.
14. Known as *Nahr el 'Asl* in Arabic, Oronte is a river located at the Syrian border with Turkey where the city of Antioch is located. Antioch, currently a Turkish city, occupied an important place in history as the center of the Hellenic Orient, then the third city in importance after Rome and Alexandria when conquered by the Romans in 64 B.C. Evangelized by Christians from Jerusalem, namely, Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas, Antioch became a religious metropolis with Saint Peter as its first bishop. The Persians conquered it in 540, Arabs in 636, Byzantines in 969, and the Seljoukides in 1084. The first Crusaders in 1098 conquered it and transformed it to a principal frank city, Mamlouks reconquered it in 1268, and the Ottomans in 1516. Placed under the French mandate in 1920, Antioch became Turkish territory again in 1939.
15. Religious affiliation.
16. Jamil M. Yazigi, "American Presbyterian Mission Schools in Lebanon" (Master's thesis, Education Department of the A.U.B. Beirut, 1964), 69.
17. Yazigi, "American," 91–92.
18. "The mountains of Epire and of Lebanon . . . always lived because of Lebanon's immigrants." Henri Mendras, *Sociétés Paysannes* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1976), 146.
19. Ibid.

Chapter 2

1. Courrier de l'Unesco, March 1975, Year XVIII.
2. Simone De Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe* (Paris: Gallimard coll. Idées, 1949), 1: 16–19.
3. Roger Garaudy, *Pour l'avènement de la femme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1981), 18–38.

4. Alouche Richard, "L'image de la femme à travers le romain libanais," *Travaux et Jours*, *no. 47* (Beirut, 1973), 73–90.
5. Gaston Bouthoul, *Les mentalités* (Paris: P.U.F., 1971), 30–31. "La mentalité, du point de vue de la société, constitue la structure mentale spécifique de chaque civilisation; et du point de vue du sujet, elle est un ensemble d'idées et de dispositions intellectuelles intégrées dans le même individu, reliées entre elles par des rapports logiques et des rapports de croyance."
6. Hana Abi Rached, *Mu'gam al-amtal* (Beirut: Da'irat al-ma'rif, 1954), 73.
7. Selim Abou, *Le bilinguisme arabe-français au Liban* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1962), 101.

Chapter 3

1. Henri Mendras, *Sociétés Paysannes* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1976), 79.
2. Claude Levi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1967), 135.
3. Ibid., 136.
4. Germaine Tillion, *Le harem et les cousins* (Paris: éd. du Seuil, 1966), 8.
5. Ibid., 71.
6. Ibid., 120.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Mounir Chamoun, "Problèmes de la famille au Liban," *Travaux et Jours*, no. 25 (Beyrouth 1967), 27–30.
11. Translation, Marie-Claude Thomas.
12. Claude Levi-Strauss, *Les structures*, 47.
13. University Saint Joseph, La *génération désenchantée*, *L'Orient-Le Jour,* 2002.
14. *L'Orient Le Jour*, "L'Appartenance communautaire dicte largement les mariages des Libanaises à des étrangers," July 20, 2009.
15. A closer examination of these unions reveals that Lebanese Sunnis tended to choose foreign spouses that are Palestinian refugees, Syrian, or Egyptian; Shi'i women often married Iraqis, Syrians, or Egyptians; and Christian women most often chose Syrian, American, French, and to a lesser extent Palestinian or Egyptian husbands.
16. Gospel According to Matthew 10: 1–12.
17. Hanna Malek, *Al-ahwal, Al-shakhsiyya wa-mahakimuha fil-tawa'if al masihiyya fi Suriyya wa Lubnan* (Beirut: Dar el Nashr, 1972), 96.
18. Robert Clément, *Le mariage chrétien au Liban* (Paris: Etudes, 1981), 665–678.
19. Ibid., 674.
20. Mounir Chamoun, *Problèmes*, 39.
21. Alex and Magda are the given names for this case study. I have not disclosed their real names for privacy reasons.
22. Phares Zoghbi, "Le Mariage civil et la laïcité," *L'Orient Le Jour*, August 12, 2009.

23. Mounir Chamoun, *Le Mariage*, 39: "à côté du mariage religieux qui prendrait alors la valeur d'un signe d'engagement plus personnel dans la vie de l'Église et d'un désir de vie spirituelle plus profonde, le mariage civil permettrait la généralisation du régime matrimonial monogamique et l'exogamie communautaire dont le Liban a besoin pour homogénéiser ses assises sociales."

Chapter 4

1. In the United States, each state provides licenses to citizens interested in becoming a notary public. The application process requires simple criteria and the term of a notary public is only four years. In Lebanon, as in France, the criteria for becoming a notary public are more demanding for this prestigious profession. The candidate must have a Master's degree in Law, and the Department of Justice nominates the notary public for life. The latter administers his/her functions in the private sector.
2. Fadia Kiwan, *Al-adwar al-ijtima'iyya lilmar'a al-'amila fi kul min el-Ordon wa Suriyya wa Lubnan* (Beirut: NCLW, 2004), 105.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

Chapter 5

1. Term used in Lebanese dialect to refer to Shi'is.
2. Lebanon map by Marie-Claude Thomas.
3. The Druze focus on absolute monotheism and refer to themselves as *Muwahhidun* (Unitarians). The details of the faith are secret and shared by a small number of the community the *'uqqal* (enlightened), which includes men and women since the earliest days. Women's issues set the Druze apart from other Muslim sects. Polygamy and temporary marriage (*mut'ah*) are forbidden, and women can initiate divorce proceedings. The Druze also believe in the transmigration of souls, or *taqannus*.
4. Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 8.
5. See Chapter 1, Human Geographic Framework.
6. Hizbullah had formed in Lebanon and became an influential Shi'i political party following the Iranian Revolution.
7. Michel Hajji Georgiou and Michel Touma "L'émergence du Hezbollah, aboutissement d'un lent processus de maturation sociopolitique," *L'Orient Le Jour*, July 29, 2006, Etudes, 6.
8. Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), Preface XV.
9. Ibid., 182–183.
10. Sabrina Mervin, *Le Hezbollah état des lieux* (France: Actes Sud, 2008), 74–85.
11. Na'im Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (London: Saqi, 2005), 235.

12. William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000), 219–225.
13. Though controversial, this was the Christian analysis and conviction of the situation. Selim Abou, *Béchir Gemayelou L'Esprit d'un Peuple* (Paris: Edition anthropos, 1984), 47–49. See William Cleveland, *The Lebanese Civil War, 1975–1990*, 372–379. Pierre Gemayel, head of the paramilitary Phalange *Kataeb*, and former President Camille Chamoun, leader of his militia, the Tigers, realizing that the government and the army were inept to take decisive actions against the Palestinians decided to take it themselves.
14. Lebanese *Intifida,* or the Cedar Revolution, means "shaking off" and describes the popular uprising of the Lebanese against Syrian's meddling in Lebanon's sovereignty, beginning in February 2005 following the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri. Popular mottos of the movement were *Hurriyya, Siyada, Istiqlal* (Freedom, Sovereignty, Independence), and *Haqiqa, Hurriyya, Wahda wataniyya* (Truth, Freedom, National unity).
15. The Emir of Qatar invited all Lebanese political parties to Doha. He convinced them to reach an agreement to elect a new Lebanese president. Lebanon had had no president for six months.
16. *Almanar.com*, "In Any Other Clash We Will Attain a Historic Victory," February 6, 2010, http://www.almanar.com.lb/NewsSite/NewsDetails.aspx?id (accessed February 6, 2010). Hizbullah members also identify this 33-day war as the "Divine Victory."
17. This chronology and analysis echoes Michel Hajji Georgio and Michel Touma's approach.
18. Lebanon was under French Mandate from 1918 to 1845.
19. "The first political division France imposed was the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920. To the old *mutasarrifiyah* of Mount Lebanon, France added the coastal cities of Tripoli, Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut; in addition, France removed the fertile Bekaa valley from Syrian jurisdiction and placed it within the frontiers of the expanded Lebanese State." Cleveland, *A History*, 213.
20. The American University of Beirut became coeducational in 1922; currently, its student body is 52 percent male and 48 percent female. "About the University: Facts and Figures," American University of Beirut, http://www.aub.edu/about/facts.html (accessed January 25, 2010).
21. The mission of the *Unversité Saint-Joseph* is to encourage the interfaith dialogue through biculturalism and multilanguages. "Mission de l'USJ," *Université Saint-Joseph,*http://www.usj.edu.lb/en/files/mission.html(accessed January 25, 2010).
22. Najaf is a religious center of the Shi'i located in Iraq, south of Baghdad, and six miles west of Kufa. The shrine of Imam Ali, a seminary, and the grand mosque of Kufa where Ali was assassinated are among its historical sites. Qom, a small town south of Teheran, is the leading center of Shi'i theological seminaries. Pilgrims arrive daily to the gold dome shrine of Fatimah, sister of the eighth Imam. In the 1960s Qom became a place of resistance to the governance of the Pahlavi's

state. Qom has become a center of religious and political activities since the Iranian Revolution in 1977–1979. Qom is home to prominent Shi'i leaders. See Esposito, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* (New York: Oxford, 2009) volume 4, 213–216 and 459–463.

23. Georgiou and Touma, "L'émergence," 6.
24. Shaery Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite*, "Was Musa el-Sadr Iranian or Lebanese?" Accent vs. genealogy, 128–130. Esposito, Islam, 186–191. "The Imam Musa Sadr," al-mashriq.com, http://almashriq.hiof.no/Lebanon/300/320/324/324.2/musa-sadr (accessed February 6, 2010). Musa el-Sadr was seen as a moderate figure asking Christians to give up some of their power and while pursuing ecumenism between religious groups. He cofounded the Social Movement with the Catholic archbishop Grégoire Haddad (1960). He was an opponent of Israel but also attacked the PLO for harming Lebanese civilians with their attacks. In August 1978, he mysteriously disappeared during a visit to Libya. The Lebanese Shi'i came to see him as a spiritual leader, a religious hero, and a worthy descendant of Hussein, a martyr and "Vanished Imam." His niece is married to Mohammad Khatami, former president of Iran.
25. "Notre nom n'est pas 'metwali,' notre nom estcelui du refus (*'Rafedun'*), celui de la vengeance, celui de ceux qui se révoltentcontretoutetyrannie. Mêmesi nous devons le payer de notre sang, de notre vie . . . Nous ne voulons plus de beaux sentiments, mais de l'action. Nous sommeslas des mots, des états-d'âmes, des discours . . . A partird'aujourd'hui, je ne me tairai pas sivousrestezinertes." Georgiou and Touma, "L'émergence," 6.
26. Qassem, *Hizbullah*, 14–15.
27. Rule of Shi'i jurisprudent. See Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'te Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 104–109, 142–143.
28. Qassem, *Hizbullah,* 15–20.
29. The Israeli army led by General Ariel Sharon.
30. Nabih Berri participated in the "Committee of Salvation" formed by former Maronite president Elias Sarkis, along with the Sunni prime minister Chafiq Wazzan, the Maronite Bechir Gemayel, and the Druze Walid Jumblatt.
31. Qassem, *Hizbullah,* 19.
32. Ibid., 20.
33. Ibid., 43–49.
34. Georgiou and Touma, "La naissance du Hezbollah, et les racines de son action politique," *L'Orient Le Jour*, August 1, 2009, 5.
35. Qassem citing Surah 3, *al'Umran*, verse 126 in *Hizbullah the Story,* 48.
36. *Everywomen*, Women of Hizbullah Part 1, YouTube, April 3, 2009.
37. Ibid., 30.
38. Ibid., 187–191, 207–208.
39. Hassan Nasrallah, "Manifesto of Oct. 30, 2009," Almanar.com, http://almanar.com.lb/NewsSite/NewsDetails.aspx?id=113293&Language=ar (accessed January 10, 2010).
40. Qassem, *Hizbullah*, 170.

41. Georgiou and Touma, "Hezbollah entre 'culture de l'espace' et 'culture du territoire,' " *L'Orient Le Jour*, August 4, 2009, 6.
42. Qassem, *Hizbullah,* 270.
43. Ibrahim Amin el Said, *Al Bayan el-Ta'sisi li Hizbullah,* Beirut: February 16, 1985.
44. The right-wing Christians, who were against the Syrian army occupation of Lebanon, boycotted the 1992 Lebanese Parliamentary elections. As a result, the majority of the elected members of the parliament turned out to be pro-Syrian.
45. Georgiou and Touma, "Hezbollah entre 'culture de l'espace,' " 6.
46. Familiar in pre-Islamic era, the term refers to social solidarity based on blood relations. *'Assabiyya* unites a group of people against strangers and at the same time reinforces the values of the group.
47. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 22–24.
48. Farms located in Southern Lebanon at the border of Israel.
49. Different Jihad organizations with different objectives, strategies, and targets spread. These organizations have been increasingly recognized as fundamentalist. For instance, the Palestinian Jihad Movement appeared in 1979 claiming responsibility for attacks against soldiers and Israeli civilians.
50. Square in Beirut that is secured by Shi'i presence.
51. Georgiou and Touma, "Hezbollah," 6.
52. The March 14 Alliance is named after the date of the Cedar Revolution that marks the popular uprising following the death of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri. This coalition of political parties and independents in Lebanon, led by Saad Hariri, son of Rafiq Hariri and current prime minister, as well as Samir Geagea, the president of the Christian Lebanese Forces, call for sovereignty over all Lebanese territories.
53. The FPM of Michel Aoun left the Alliance (March 14 was not an established alliance back then) before the 2005 general elections due to major disagreements and became part of the pro-Syrian March 8 Alliance in 2006. The FPM is one of the allies of Hizbullah.
54. *An Nahar*, "Al Intikhabaat fi el mizan el masiHi," July 9, 2009, 1.
55. Ibid.
56. A subnational administrative district.
57. "Carter Center Commends Lebanon's Successful Elections; Notes Shortcomings and Encourages Continued Reform," CarterCenter.org, http://cartercenter.org/news/pr/lebanon-statement-060809.html?printerFriendly=true (accessed February 2, 2010).
58. See later chapter on veiling in Part II, Chapter 6.
59. *An Nahar*, "Sadiq Caricature," cartoon, June 9, 2009, 24. See the blue caricature, a symbol of the March 14 movement. The blue symbol represents the peaceful blue sky of Lebanon.
60. Germaine Tillion, *Le harem et les cousins* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1966), 163.

Chapter 6

1. Qassim Amin, *Al-A'mal al-kamila li-Qassim Amin, Al mar'a al jadida* (Beirut: Al-mu'asasa el-'Arabiyya lil-diraasaat wal nashr, 1976), 178.
2. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 144–145.
3. Rifa'at el-Tahtawi, *Takhliss al-ibriz* (Beirut: Al-mu'asasa el-'arabiyya lil-diraasaat wal nashr, 1973), 258.
4. Rifa'at el-Tahtawi, *Takhliss,* 105.
5. *Al-murshed al-amin lil banat wal banin* (Beirut: Al-mu'asasa el-'arabiyya lil-diraasaat wal nashr, 1973), 393.
6. Abd el-Rahman Kawakibi, *Oum el Qura* (Beirut), 157.
7. Butrus al-Bustani, "Discourse on the Education of Women," *Actes de l'Association Syrienne* (Beirut, 1852).
8. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in a Liberal Age* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1983), 162.
9. Ibid., 151.
10. Ibid., 15.
11. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender*, 164.
12. Ibid., 156.
13. Ibid., 158.
14. Malek Abi Saab and Rula Jurdi Abi Saab, "A Century after Qassim Amin," *Al-Jadid*, Winter 2002.
15. Ibid., 1.
16. Ibid., 2.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.

Chapter 7

1. Marina Da Silva, "Entre religion et politique," *Le Monde Diplomatique,* 2006, Monde Arabe, Femmes, Islam, Europe.
2. Abderrahim Manchini, *Femmes et Islam, L'impératif universel d'égalité* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 25.
3. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 79–183.
4. For more details, see Chapter 12.
5. Fadwa Al-Guindi, *Veil, Modesty, Privacy, and Resistance* (New York: Berg, 2000), 82–83.
6. Al-Guindi citing Graham-Brown, Sarah 1988: 71–21, in *Images of Women: The portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East*, 1860–1950. London Quartet Books., "Women are at the center of the family and its sanctity, and hence the term extends to the family in general, as commonly used in verbal greetings and inquiries about health." 85.

7. Barbara Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 120–121.
8. Stowasser, *Women,* 118.
9. Ibid., 344.
10. Tarif Khalidi, *The Qur'an* Sura 33:53 (New York: Viking, 2008), 343–344.
11. Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, translation of *Le Harem Politique* (New York: Perseus Books Publishing L.L.C., 1991), 92.
12. Mernissi citing Tabari *Tafsir*, Dar al-Ma'rifa ed, volume 22, 87.
13. Ibid., *The Veil*, 87–89.
14. *Shirk* vs. *tawhid*: *shirk* means worship of idols or joint worship to God; on the contrary, *tawhid* emphasizes that Muslims must proclaim and worship one God alone.
15. Tradition cited in Khaled Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name* (UK: One World Oxford, 2001), 211.
16. Ibid.
17. El-Fadl citing al-Jawzi, *Speaking*, 212.
18. El Fadl, *Speaking*, 218.
19. El Fadl, citing Ibn Khaldun, Aby Zayd' Abd al- Rahman b. Muhammad (1333–1406)d. *Al-Muqaddimah*, An Arab Philosophy of History. He is unique among the thinker of Islam; he explained the process by which power is seized and maintained, the changes it undergoes, and the product of successful power, which is civilization or *Umran,* the life of city. History is rooted in his philosophy, and he argues that early theologians often accepted the authenticity of traditions with problematic and social implications. Thus, the *isnad* (the chain of transmission for a tradition traced back to Prophet Muhammad) analysis is insufficient, and the *matn* (substantive content of a hadith) analysis is imperative, 218.
20. El-Fadl, *Speaking*, 214. See Chapter 8, Fadlallah *tafsir*, 12.
21. Ibid., 224.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 225.
24. El-Fadl, *Speaking*, 209–232.

Chapter 8

1. Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, *The Idea of Women in Fundamentalist Islam* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003), 194–196.
2. Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short Story* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 36.
3. Sabrina Mervin, *Le Hezbollah: état des lieux* (Paris: Cursives, 2008), 248.
4. For more information, see Chapter 5.
5. Shehadeh, *The Idea of Women*, 194.
6. Khalidi, Tarif, *The Qur'an* (New York: Viking—Penguin Group, 2008), 62.
7. Ibid., 66.

8. Shehadeh, *The Idea*, 199.
9. A Muslim prolific contemporary theologian, ideologue, and politician who has played a significant role in the politics of Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and South Asia, and the South Asian communities of the Persian Gulf, Great Britain, and North America.
10. Barbara Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 128.
11. Khalidi, *The Qur'an*, 284.
12. Fadlallah, *Dunya al-Mar'a* (Beirut: Dar al-Malak, 2005), 140–141.
13. Verse (4:1) And God created you of the same soul and from it created a spouse.
14. Muhamad Hussein Fadlallah, *Ta'amullat Islamiyya Hawla al-Mar'a* (Beirut: Dar al-Malaak), 26–30.
15. Khalidi, *The Qur'an*, 341.
16. Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, 97–98.
17. Ibid., 98.
18. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 241.
19. Khalidi, *The Qur'an*, 328.
20. Khalidi, *The Qur'an*, 31. "But men are a grade more responsible than them."
21. Ibid., 25.
22. Fadlallah, *Ta'mullat*, 90–96.
23. Khalidi, *The Qur'an*, 66–67.
24. Fadlallah, *Ta'mullat*, 119.
25. Fadlallah, *Fatwa limuwaajahat al'inf dud al-mar'a*, Maqaalaat no. 244, Fadlallah's library 2007.
26. Ibid.
27. Ahmad, *Women*, 67.
28. Fadlallah, *Ta'mullat,* 139.
29. Khalidi, *The Qur'an*, 29.
30. *'ibadat* indicates worship laws versus *maslaha* that indicates public interest.
31. Fadlallah, *Ta'mullat,* 136–138.
32. Qâsim Amin. *al-A'mal al-kamila, Tahrîr el-mar'a* (Beirut: Al-Mu'assas el-'arabiya lil-dirâsat was nasr, 1976), 95.
33. Ibid., 104.
34. Eva de Vitray Meyerovitch, "La femme musulmane devant la loi," *Monde Diplomatique,* Le dossier de France, Pays Arabes.
35. Khalidi, *The Qur'an*, 31.
36. Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 63.
37. Khalidi, *The Qur'an*, 77.
38. Germaine Tillion, *Le harem*, 178. "Dans l'Islam comme en chrétienté la femme méditerranéenne a été régulièrement spoliée . . . Cette spoliation ne survit actuellement que dans des zones résiduelles, la cause de cette évolution doit être cherchée dans un progrès économique qui entraîne tout [détruisant notamment,

de plus en plus, le 'bien de famille,' et amenant un nombre de femmes sans cesse croissant à exercer une profession]."

39. C. Labrusse, Droit de la Famille, Droit Musulman, *Encyclopedia Universalis* E-F, 909–910.
40. Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 83.
41. Dir. Mai Masri, 33 Days, Arab Film Distribution, *Al-Jazeera documentary Channel*, DVD, 2007.
42. *Everywomen*, Women of Hizbullah Part 1, YouTube, April 3, 2009.
43. Ibid. Women of Hizbullah Part 2.
44. Sabrina Tavernise, "A Girl Life Bound Close to Hezbollah," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2006.

Interview—Individual and Communal Perspectives: Muslim Discourse

1. *Ja'afari* is the Shi'i school of jurisprudence.

Chapter 9

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1878), 466–477.
2. Frederic Lenoir, *Petit traite d'histoire des religions* (France: Plon, 2008), 338–339.
3. Yvonne Haddad Yazbeck, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (Albany: State University of New York, 1982), 9.
4. An influential German Jewish political theorist (1906–1975). She examines the modern world through a philosophical knowledge of the past.
5. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 140–141.
6. Haddad Yazbeck, *Contemporary*, 5.
7. Ibn Khaldun, a prominent Muslim historiographer and historian 1302–1406, introduced this term, which refers to social solidarity based on blood relations.

Chapter 10

1. I have not disclosed the real names of my interviewees for privacy reasons. Sayyid is a common honorific title and Ustaz means professor.
2. Literally: alien, extraneous, or foreign, in this case, a sense of "other."
3. Ayatollah Khomeini designated Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah in 1978 as the *marja' al-taqlid*—source of tradition or imitation.
4. Traditionally, members of the family do the corpse washing, with males washing the bodies of males and females washing the bodies of females. This new phenomenon of mothers washing and preparing their martyr sons signifies the courage and pride of martyrs' mothers.

5. The Iranian Shi'ism was founded by the '*Ulema* from the 'Amel Mountain in Lebanon. Every Shi'i person, and in particular, the clerics of the Islamic sphere, are aware of this episode of doctrinal history. In this environment, they perceive Iranian help as a just return from history, as the '*Ulema* Shi'ism is the most authentic form of Shi'ism.
6. Sixth Imam or leader in the line of Ali who founded the Shi'i school of law in 749.
7. Sayyid is a honorific title used for the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad in the male line of Hasan and Husayn; still the Sayyids today constitute a respectable class in Muslim societies endowed with spiritual and social supremacy.
8. *Hijab* means veil and its synonyms.
9. Michel Aoun, a Christian leader and ally of Hizbullah.
10. *Iftar* is the Arabic word for meal breaking fast in the month of Ramadan.
11. *Thaqafa* means culture.
12. In Shi'i rite, the Mahdi is the awaited Messiah to bring peace, justice, and unity to a world torn by corruption.

Chapter 11

1. More information available on Gebran Tueni in Part II, Chapter 5, 7.
2. All poems can be found in Nadia Tueni, *Les Oeuvres Poétiques Complètes* (ed. Dar An-Nahar, 1986). Translated by Marie-Claude Thomas.
3. Laura is a given name; I have not disclosed the real name for privacy reasons.
4. Café/restaurant located close to the river.
5. Jean Corbon, *L'Eglise des Arabes* (Paris: éd. du Cerf, 1977), 77–78. "Nous sommes ici moins dans une civilisation de domination que d'accueil. La grandeur et la vulnérabilité de notre région viennent en partie de cette vocation qui monte de la terre: Etre en relations ouvertes plus qu'en autarcie dominatrice."
6. Robert Abdo, *La famille Libanaise* (Beyrouth: éd. des Lettres Orientales, 1943), 68. "Il ya des fatalités de race, de climat, des hérédités physiologiques et morales contre lesquelles tout vient échouer."
7. Ibid., 70.
8. Georgina is a given name; I have not disclosed the real name for privacy reasons.
9. *Qontoche* or rectory.
10. Roseanne Saad Khalaf, *Hikayat Short Stories by Lebanese Women* (London: Telegram, 2006).
11. Saad Khalaf, *Hikayat*, 77.
12. Leila Baalbaki, *Je vis*, trad. Michel Bardot (Paris: ed. du seuil, 1958), 167.
13. Youssef directed Haifa Wehbé's leading performance in the film *Dokkam Shihate*.
14. Translated by Marie-Claude Thomas.

Chapter 12

1. André Vargnac, *Civilisation traditionnelle et genre de vie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948), 293.

2. Mohammed Arkoun, *L'Islam hier-demain* (Paris: éd. Buchet/Chastel, 1978), 227.
3. Gaston Bouthol, *Les mentalités* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 11.
4. Arkoun, *L'Islam*, 135–136.
5. Linda Matar, "La Femme Libanaise: Sa Situation et Son rôle," llwr.org/ . . . */conf-laicite-10-mars-2007*_Linda_Matar *(accessed May 29, 2012).*
6. Ibid.
7. Les Libanaises se rebiffent contre le harcèlement sexuel, *L'Orient-Le Jour*, April 25, 2010.
8. Shadow report on the implementation of Beijing Platform in (Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon), 15 years from Beijing Platform, 55.
9. L'Orient-Le Jour, March 8, 2008.
10. The Fourth Congress organized by the United Nations in 1995 in Beijing asserted the necessity of giving 30 percent of seats in parliament to women by 2005.
11. Matar, "La Femme Libanaise."
12. Ibid.
13. *Sigha*: the national pact.

Conclusion

1. Roula Azar Douglas, "Club Laïc." *L'Orient Le Jour*, April 21, 2012.
2. Mohammad Fneich, a parliamentary representative of Hizbulah.
3. John Donahue, "Mistranslation of God: Fundamentalism in the Twenty-First Century," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 427–442, October 2004, 230.
4. Yvonne Haddad Yazbeck, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 67.
5. *Al-Arabiya.net*, "Lebanon Unveils First All-Women Police Unit," May 29, 2012 by Nadia Mayen http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/23/215988.html (accessed Monday 30, 2012).

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